OR, THE

MYSTERIE OF Providence.

WHEREIN

The *Being* and *Efficacy* of *Providence* is *Asserted*, and *Vindicated*. The *Methods* of *Providence* as it passes through the several *Stages* of our Lives Opened; and the proper course of improving all Providences directed, in a TREATISE upon *Psalm* 57. *Ver.* 2.

By *John Flavell*, Preacher of the Gospel.

Totam Dei Providentiam omnia eandem dirigere ad Filium suum, & ad Electorum salutem; ac tum demum Spiritum Dei, cum videt Impios damnari, ac Electos servari; ex qua utraque re Deum glorificetur. Hieron. Zanchii Miscell. Tom. 2. pag. 199.

Psal. 111. 4. זֵכֶר עָשָׂה לְנִפְלְאֹתָיו *memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum.*

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TO THE

Right Honourable

WILLIAM

EARL of

BEDFORD,

Lord *RUSSELL* of *Thornehaugh*, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the *GARTER*.

My LORD,

IT was a weighy, and savoury Speech, which a Pious Pen once saved from your Lordship's lips, viz. that *You accounted the Prayers of Gods Ministers and People, the best Walls about your House.* He that so accounts, doubtless understands,

Mr. *Ishe Ambro Epist.* his *Ultima.*

that Prayer engageth Providence, *Isa.* 45. 11. and Providence so engaged, is the surest Munition, *Job* 1. 10.

Many great men enclose their dwellings with an high Wall, but the foundation (as the Wisest of men observes) is laid in their own conceits, *Prov.* 18. 11. Yea, in sin, and crying sin too, *Hab.* 2. 12. Of such Walls we may say, as the *Oracle* to *Phocas*, ἐὰν ὑψοῖς τὰ τείχη ἕως οὐρανοῦ, ἐνδὸν τὸ κακόν. If the Building emulate the Skies, yet sin being in the bottom, all will totter.

'Tis a fond vanity, to think of ensuring a destiny that can controll the Stars, and endure the assaults of Fortune, (as they love to speak) whilst Providence is not engaged for them, no not so much as by a bare acknowledgement.

My Lord, It is not the vast bulk of an Estate, nor the best humane security in the World, but the vigilant care

of

of Divine Providence, that guards both It, and its Owners from the ſtroke of ruine. 'Tis the fear of God within us, and the Providence of God round about us, which make the firm and ſolid baſis of all ſanctified and durable proſperity. It is beyond all debate, that there is a Providence of God alwayes enfolding thoſe in everlaſting arms, that bear his Image. The Impreſs of that Image upon you, and the Embraces of thoſe Arms about you, will advance you higher, and ſecure you better, than your Noble Birth or Eſtate could ever do.

My Lord, Providence hath molded you, *è meliori luto*, made you both the Offspring and Head of an Illuſtrious Family, planted you in a rich and pleaſant Soyl, cauſed many Noble Branches to ſpring from you, drawn your life even unto old age, through the delights and honours of this world. And now that you have tried

all those things that make the fairest pretensions to happiness; what have you found in all these painted beauties, and false glozing excellencies which have successively courted you? Which of them all can you pronounce self-desirable? Which can you call *objectum par amori*? What is it to have the flesh indulged, sense gratified, fancy tickled? What have you found in meats and drinks, in stately Houses and pleasant Gardens, in Gold and Silver, in Honour and Applause to match the Appetite of your Nobler Soul? Surely (*My Lord*) to turn from them all with a generous disdain, as one that knows where to find better entertainment, is much more *Noble*, than wholly to immerse, and lose our Spirits in those sensual fruitions, as many do, alas, too many in our dayes!

We are fallen into the dregs of time. *Sensuality* runs every where into

into *Atheism*. *Providentia peperit divitias, sed filia devoravit matrem.* The largesses of Providence have so blinded, and perfectly stupified the minds of some, that they neither own a Providence, nor a God, who do σαρκοποιεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅλον, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ σώματος ἡδονὰς κατασυβωτεῖν, as *Plutarch* both wittily and judiciously reply'd upon *Colotes* the *Epicurean*.

But blessed be God, there is a sincere part, both of the *Nobles* and *Commons* of *England*, which this Gangrene hath not yet touched, and I hope, never shall.

My Lord, It is both your Honour and Interest, to be ὅλως τοῦ κρείττονος, the entire and devoted servant of Providence. It was once the wish of a good man, *optarem id me esse Deo, quod est mihi manus mea.* This is the most Noble and Divine life that can be, to live and act in this world upon Eternal designs. To look upon our selves and

what

what we have, as things devoted to God; not to be content that Providence ſhould ſerve it ſelf of us, (for ſo it doth even of thoſe things which underſtand nothing of it) but to ſtudy wherein we may ſerve Providence, and be inſtrumental in its hand for the good of many; this is to be truly Honourable; *quo magis quis Deo vivit, eo evadit nobilior, clarior, divinior.*

How much God hath honoured you in this reſpect, the World will underſtand better, when your Lordſhip ſhall be gathered to your Fathers, and ſleep in the duſt, then he that praiſeth, cannot be ſuſpected of flattery; nor he that is praiſed, be moved with vain glory: But the approbation of God, is infinitely better than the moſt glorious Name among men, before, or after death.

And as it is moſt *honourable* to *ſerve*, ſo you will find it moſt comfortable to *obſerve* the wayes of God in his Provi-

Providence. To compoſe our ſelves to think of the *Conduct of Providence* through all the *Stages* of life we have hitherto paſſed. To note the reſults of its profound Wiſdom, the Effects of its tender Care, the diſtinguiſhing fruits of its ſpecial Bounty: To mark how Providences have gone along ſtep by ſtep with the Promiſes, and both with us, till they have now brought us near to our Everlaſting Reſt, Oh how delectable! how tranſporting are ſuch Meditations as theſe!

My Lord, It is the deſign of this *Manual*, to aſſert the *Being* and *Efficacy* of Providence againſt the *Atheiſm* of the times; and to diſplay the Wiſdom and care of the Providence of God in all the Concerns of that people who are really his. 'Tis probable, if your Lordſhip will ſtoop to ſuch a vulgar compoſure, ſomewhat may occurr of a grateful reliſh to your pious mind.

mind. I confess, It is not accommodated, either in exactness of method, or elegancy of style, to gratifie the curious; nor yet is it destitute of what may please and profit the truly gracious.

Should I here recite the pleasures and advantages resulting from an humble and heedful eying of the methods of Providence, it would look more like a *Book* in an *Epistle*, than an *Epistle* in a *Book*. One taste of spiritual sense will satisfie you better, than all the accurate descriptions and high *Encomiums* that the most elegant Pen can bestow upon it.

My Lord, It is not that eminent station that some persons retain (in civil respects) above the vulgar, that will enable them to penetrate the Mysteries, and relish the sweetness of Providence better than others; (for doubtless many that live immediately upon Providence for daily bread,

do

do thereby gain a nearer acquaintance with it, than those, whose outward enjoyments flow to them in a more plentiful and stated course) but those that excel in grace and experience, those that walk and converse with God in all his dispensations towards them; these are the persons who are most fully and immediately capable of these high pleasures of the Christian life. The daily flow and increase whereof in your Lordships Noble Person and Family, is the hearty desire of

Your Lordships most humble servant,

From my Study at *Dartmouth*, *Aug.* 10. 1677.

JOHN FLAVELL.

To

To the ingenuous *Readers*, those especially that are the heedful *Observers* of the wayes of *PROVIDENCE*.

Reader,

THERE *are two wayes whereby the blessed God condescends to manifest himself to men, His* Word, *and his* Works. *Of the written Word we must say, No words like these were ever written since the beginning of Time, which can (as one speaks) take life and root in the Soul, yea, doth it as really as the seed doth in the ground: and are fitted to be engrafted and naturalized there, so as no coalition in nature can be more real than this,* James 1. 21. *This is the most transcendent and glorious* medium *of manifestation*; God hath magnified his word above all his name, *Psal.* 138. 2.

However, the manifestations of God by his Works, whether of Creation *or* Providence *have their value, and glory: but the prime glory*

and excellency of his Providential works *consists in this, that they are the very fulfillings and real accomplishments of his written word. By a wise and heedful attendance hereunto, we might learn that excellent Art, which is (not unfitly) called by some* Scientia architectonica, *an Art to clear the Mysterious occurrences of Providence, by reducing them to the written word, and there lodge them as* Effects *in their proper* Causes. *And doubtless, this is one of the rarest essayes men could pursue against* Atheism, *to shew, not only how Providences concurr in a most obvious tendency to confirm this great Conclusion,* Thy word is Truth; *but how it sometimes extorts also the confession of a* God, *and the truth of his* Word, *from those very tongues which have boldly denyed it.* Æschyles *the* Persian *relating their discomfiture by the* Grecian *Army, makes this notable observation, "when the* Grecian *Forces hotly "pursued us, (saith he) and we must needs "venture over the great water* Strymon, *then "frozen; but beginning to thaw; when a hun-"dred to one we had all dyed for it, with mine "eyes I then saw many of those* Gallants *whom "I had heard before so boldly maintain,* there "was no God, *every one upon their knees, with "eyes and hands lifted up, begging hard for "help and mercy, and entreating that the Ice "might hold till they got over. Many thou-sand souls hath Providence forced the very

Enemies of God to set to his Truths; which greatly tends to our confirmation therein; but especially, to see how the Word *and* Providences *of God do enlighten each other; and how the Scriptures contain all those Events, both great and small, which are disposed by Providence in their seasons: And how not only the Promises of the Word, are in the general faithfully fulfilled to the Church in all her Exigences and Distresses; but in particular to every member of it; they being all furnished by Providence with multitudes of Experiences to this use and end. O how useful are such observations!*

And as the profit and use, so the delight and pleasure resulting from the observations of Providence, is exceeding great. It will doubtless be a part of our entertainment in Heaven, *to view with transporting delight, how the designs and methods were laid to bring us thither: and what will be a part of our blessedness in* Heaven, *may well be allowed to have a prime ingrediency into our* Heaven *upon Earth. To search for pleasure among the due Observations of Providence, is to search for water in the Ocean: for Providence doth not only, ultimately design to bring you to Heaven, but (as intermediate thereunto) to bring (by this means) much of Heaven into your souls in the way thither.*

How great a pleasure is it to discern how the

most wise God is providentially steering all to the Port of his own Praise, and his peoples Happiness, whilst the whole world is busily employed in managing the Sails, and tugging at the Oars, with a quite opposite design and purpose? To see how they promote his design by opposing it, and fulfil his will by resisting it; enlarge his Church by scattering it, and make their rest to come the more sweet to their souls, by making their condition so restless in the world. This is pleasant to observe in general: But to record and note its particular dealings upon our selves; with what profound wisdom, infinite tenderness, and incessant vigilancy it hath managed all that concerns us from first to last, is ravishing and transporting.

O what an History might we compile of our own Experiences, whilst with a melting heart we trace the footsteps of Providence all along the way it hath led us to this day; and set our Remarques upon its more eminent performances for us, in the several Stages of our Life!

Here it prevented, and there it delivered: Here it directed, and there it corrected. In this it grieved, and in that it relieved. Here was the Poison, and there the Antidote. This Providence raised a dismal Cloud, and that dispelled it again. This straitned, and that enlarged. Here a want, and there a supply. This Relation withered, and that springing up in its room. Words cannot express the high de-

lights

lights and gratifications, a gracious heart may find in such employment as this.

O what a world of rarities are to be found in providence! The blind heedless world makes nothing of them: they cannot find one sweet bit, *where a gracious soul would make* a rich feast. Plutarch *relates very exactly, how* Timoleon *was miraculously delivered from the conspiracy of two Murderers, by their meeting in the very nick of time a certain person, who to revenge the death of his Father, killed one of them, just as they were ready to give* Timoleon *the fatal blow, though he knew nothing of the business, and so* Timoleon *escaped the danger. And what did this wonderful work of Providence think you, yield the Relator? why, though he were one of the most learned and ingenious among the* Heathen Sages, *yet all he made of it, was only this,* The Spectators (*saith he*) wondered greatly at the Artifice and contrivance which Fortune uses. *This is all he could see in it. Had a spiritual and wise Christian had the* dissecting *and* Anatomizing *of such a work of Providence, what glory would it have yielded to God! what comfort and encouragement to the Soul! The* Bee *makes a sweeter meal upon one single flower, than the* Ox *doth upon the whole Meadow, where thousands of them grow.*

O Reader, if thy heart be spiritual and well stockt with experience, if thou hast recorded the

wayes of Providence towards thee, and wilt but allow thy ſelf time to reflect upon them; what a life of pleaſure maiſt thou live! what an Heaven upon Earth doth this way lead thee into! I will not here tell thee, what I have met in this path, leſt it ſhould ſeem to ſavour of too much Vanity, non eſt religio ubi omnia patent. *There are ſome delights and enjoyments in the Chriſtian life, which are and muſt be encloſed. But Try it thy ſelf, Taſte and See, and thou wilt need no other inducement; thine own Experience will be the moſt powerful Oratory to perſwade thee to the ſtudy and ſearch of Providence.*

Hiſtories are uſually read with delight: when once the fancy is catcht, a man knows not how to disengage himſelf from it. I am greatly miſtaken, if the Hiſtory of our own lives, if it were well drawn up, and diſtinctly peruſed, would not be the pleaſanteſt Hiſtory that ever we read in our lives.

The enſuing Treatiſe is an Eſſay to that purpoſe, in which thou wilt find ſome remarques ſet upon Providence, in its paſſage through the ſeveral Stages of our life. But Reader, thou only art able to compile the Hiſtory of Providence for thy ſelf, becauſe the memorials *that furniſh it, are only in thine own hands. However here thou maiſt find a pattern, and general Rules to direct thee in that great and difficult work, which is the very end, and deſign of this* Manual.

I have not had much regard to the dreſs, and ornament in which this Diſcourſe is to go abroad, for I am debtor both to the ſtrong and weak, the wiſe and fooliſh: and in all my obſervation I have not found, that ever God hath made much uſe of laboured periods, Rhetorical flowers, and Elegancies to improve the power of Religion in the world: Yea, I have obſerved, how Providence hath ſometimes rebuked good men, when upon other Subjects they have too much affected thoſe pedantick fooleries in withdrawing from them its uſual aids, and expoſing them to ſhame; and much more may it do ſo, when it ſelf is the Subject.

Reader, if thy ſtomach be nice and ſqueaſie, and nothing will reliſh with thee, but what is ſpruce and elegant, there are ſtore of ſuch compoſures in the world, upon which thou maiſt even ſurfeit thy curious fancy: mean time there will be found ſome that will bleſs God for what thou deſpiſeſt, and make many a ſweet meal upon what thou loatheſt.

I will add no more, but my hearty prayers that Providence will direct this Treatiſe to ſuch hands, in ſuch ſeaſons, and ſo bleſs and proſper its deſign, that God may have glory, thou maiſt have benefit, and my ſelf comfort in the ſucceſs thereof, who am

Thine and the Churches ſervant in the hand of Providence,

John Flavell.

Divine Conduct,

OR THE

MYSTERIE

OF

Providence:

Opened in a

TREATISE

Upon PSAL. 57. 2.

I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.

THE greatness of God is a glorious, and unsearchable Mysterie. *The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the Earth,* Psal. 47. 3. The condescension of the most high God to men is also a profound Mysterie. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly,* Psal. 138. 6. But when both these meet together (as they do in this Scripture)

up a matchless Mysterie. Here we find the most High God performing all things for a poor distressed creature.

It is the great support and solace of the Saints in all the distresses that befall them here, that there is a Wise Spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most excentrical Creatures and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues. And indeed it were not worth while to live in a world κενῷ θεοῦ καὶ προνοίας devoid of God and Providence.

How deeply we are concerned in this matter, will appear by that great Instance, which this *Psalm* presents us with.

It was composed (as the Title notes) by *David* prayer-wise, when he hid himself from *Saul* in the *Cave*: And is inscribed with a double Title, *Altaschith Michtam of David*. *Altaschith* refers to the *scope* and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject matter.

The former signifies *destroy not*, or let there be no slaughter, and may either refer to *Saul*, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather, it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetical ejaculation, *Altaschith* destroy not.

The later Title *Michtam* signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the *Psalm*, which much more deserves such a Title, than *Pythagoras* his golden Verses did.

[illegible] *carnes à* [illegible] (i.e.) *aurum optimum*, [illegible] *instar auri*. Burgensis.

Three things are remarkable in the former part of the *Psalm*. *Viz.* (1) His extream danger. (2) His earnest address to God in that extremity. (3) The Arguments he pleads with God in that address.

His extream danger, expressed both in the Title, and body of the *Psalm*. The Title tells us, this *Psalm* was composed by him when he hid himself from *Saul* in the *Cave*. This Cave was in the Wilderness of *Engedi* among the broken Rocks where the wild Goats inhabited, an obscure and desolate hole; yet even thither the Envy of *Saul* pursued him, 1 *Sam.* 24. 1, 2. And now he that had been so long hunted as a Partridge upon the Mountains, seems to be enclosed in the net; for the place was begirt with his Enemies, and having in this place no out-let another way, and *Saul* himself entring into the mouth of this Cave, in the sides and creeks whereof he and his men lay hid, and saw him; judge to how great an extremity and to what a desperate state things were now brought: Well might he say, as it is ver. 4. *My soul is among Lyons, and I lye even among them that are set on fire.* What hope now remained? What but immediate destruction could be expected?

Yet this frights him not out of his faith and duty, but betwixt the Jaws of death he prays, and earnestly addresses himself to God for mercy, v. 1. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me.* This excellent *Psalm* was *composed* by him, when there was enough to *discompose* the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the Supplicant. Mercy, Mercy! nothing but Mercy, and that exerting it self in an extraordinary way, can now save him

The Arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress, are very considerable.

(1.) He pleads his reliance upon God, as an Argument to move mercy. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; yea in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast*, v. 1. This his trust and dependance on God, though it be not Argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *Act*; yet it is so in respect, both of the nature of the *Object*, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings; and in respect of the *Promise*, whereby protection is assured to them that fly to him for sanctuary, Isa. 26. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Thus he encourages himself from the consideration of that God, to whom he betakes himself.

(2.) He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an Argument encouraging hope under the present strait, ver. 2. *I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

In which words I shall consider two things,

1. The Duty resolved upon,
2. The Encouragement to that resolution.

1.) The duty resolved upon; *I will cry unto God.* Crying unto God, is an expression that doth not only denote *Prayer*, but *intense* and *fervent* prayer. To cry, is to pray in an holy passion; and such are usually speeding prayers, *Psalm* 18. 6. and *Hab.* 3. 7.

The Encouragements to this Resolution, and (2.)
these are twofold.

1. Objective, } and 2. Subjective, } taken from { The Soveraignty of God. The Experience he had of his *Providence*.

The Soveraignty of God, *I will cry unto God most High.* (1.) Upon this he acts his faith in Extremity of danger. *Saul* is high, but God the most high; and without his permission, he is assured *Saul* cannot touch him. He had none to help; and if he had, he knew God must first help the helpers, or they cannot help him. He had no means of defence or escape before him, but the Most High is not limited by means. This is a singular prop to faith, *Psal.* 59. 9.

The Experience of his *Providence* hitherto: (2.) *unto God that performeth all things for me.*

The word which we tradilate [*performeth*] comes from a root, that signifies both to *perfect*, and to *desist* or *cease*. For when a business is performed and perfected, the Agent then ceases and desists from working: he puts to the last hand, when he finishes the work. To such an happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement, that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psal. 138. 8. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

The *Septuagint* renders it by ὁ εὐεργετῶν με *who profiteth*, or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain Truth, that all the results and issues of Provi-

are profitable and beneficial to the Saints. But the Supplement in our Translation well receives the importance of the place, *Who performeth all things*. And it involves the most strict and proper notion of *Providence*, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes, and promises to his people. And therefore *Vatablus* and *Mus* supply and fill up the room which the conciseness of the Original leaves, with *qua promisit*, I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promised*. Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and Providence the payment.

Piscator fills it with *benignitatem & misericordiam suam*, unto God that performeth *his kindness and mercy*. But still it supposes the mercy performed, to be contained in the promise. Mercy is sweet in the promise, and much more so in the *providential performance* of it to us.

Castalio's Supplement comes nearer to ours, *rerum mearum Transactorem*, I will cry unto God most high, unto God *the Transactor of my affairs*.

But our *English*, making out the sense by an universal particle, is most fully agreeable to the scope of the Text. For it cannot but be a great encouragement to his faith, that God had transacted *all things*, or performed *all things* for him; this *Providence* that never failed him in any of the straits that ever he met with (and his life was a life of many straits) he might well hope it would not now fail him, though this were an extraordinary and matchless one.

Bring we then our thoughts a little closer to this Scripture, and it will give us a fair and lovely prospect of *Providence*.

in its { 1. Universal, 2. Effectual, 3. Beneficial, 4. Encouraging } Influence upon the Affairs and Concerns of the Saints.

The expression imports the *Universal* Interest and Influence of *Providence* in and upon all the Concerns and Interests of the Saints. It hath not only its hand in this or that, but *in all* that concerns them. It hath its eye upon every thing that relates to them throughout their lives, from first to last. Not only great, and more important, but the most minute and ordinary affairs of our lives are transacted and managed by it. It touches all things that touch us, whether more nearly or remotely. (1.)

It displaies the *Efficacy* of *Providential Influences*. *Providence* doth not only undertake, but [performeth] and perfects what concerns us. It goes through with its designs, and accomplisheth what it begins. No difficulty so clogs it, no cross accident falls in its way, but it carries its design through it. Its motions are irresistible and uncontrollable, he *performs* it for us. (2.)

And (which is sweet to consider) all its products and issues are exceeding *beneficial* to the Saints. It performs all things [for them]. 'Tis true, we often prejudge its works, and unjustly censure its designs, and under many of our straits and troubles we say, *all these things are against us*: but indeed *Providence* neither doth, nor can do any thing that is really against the true Interest and good of the Saints. For what are the works of *Providence*, but the execution of God's Decree, (3.)

and the fulfilling of his Word? and there can be no more in Providence, than is in them. Now there is nothing but *good* to the *Saints* in God's *purposes* and *promises*, and therefore, whatever *Providence* doth in their Concernments, it must be (as the Text speaks) *the performance of all things for them.*

And if so, how chearing, *supporting, and encouraging* must the consideration of these things be in a day of distress and trouble? What life and hope will it inspire our Hearts and Prayers withal, when great pressures lie upon us? It had such a chearing influence upon the *Psalmist* at this time, when the state of his affairs was to the eye of sense and reason forlorn, and desperate: there was now but an hairs breadth (as we say) betwixt him and ruine.

A potent, enraged, and implacable Enemy had driven him into the hole of a rock, and was come after him into that hole, yet now whilst *his soul is among Lyons*, whilest he lies in a cranny of the Rock, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the reflections he had upon the gracious performances of the Most High for him, from the beginning to that moment, support his soul, and inspire hope and life into his prayers. *I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

The amount of all you have in this Doctrinal Conclusion.

DOCT.

That it is the duty of the Saints, especially in times of straits, to reflect upon the performances of Providence for them in all the states, and through all the stages of their lives.

The Church in all the works of mercy, owns the

hand of God, Isa. 26. 12. *Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in* (or for) *us.* And still it hath been the pious, and constant practice of the Saints in all generations, to preserve the memory of the more famous, and remarkable *providences* that have befallen them in their times, as a precious treasure. *If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart a great many precious favours upon record; the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet: how much more sweet was the actual enjoyment?* Baxter's Saints Rest, p. 768. Thus *Moses* by divine direction wrote a memorial of that victory obtained over *Amalek* as the fruit and return of prayer, and built there an *Altar* with this Inscription *Jehovah Nissi, The Lord my Banner,* Exod. 17. 14, 15. Thus *Mordecai* and *Hester* took all care to perpetuate the memory of that signal deliverance from the plot of *Haman*, by ordaining the feast of *Purim*, as an *Anniversary throughout every generation, every family, every Province, and every City, that those days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed,* Esth. 9. 28. For this end you find *Psalms* indited, to bring to remembrance, *Psal.* 70. the Title. Parents giving suitable names to their Children, that every time they looked upon them, they might refresh the memory of Gods mercies, 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. The very places where eminent Providences have appeared, new named, upon no other design, but to perpetuate the memorial of those sweet Providences which so refreshed them there: Thence *Bethel* took its name, *Gen.* 28. 19. And that well of water where *Hagar* was seasonably refreshed by the Angel in her distress, *Beer-la-hai-roi*, the well of him that liveth and looketh on me, *Gen.* 16. 14.

Yea,

Yea, the Saints have given, and God hath assumed to himself new Titles upon this very score and account; *Abraham*'s *Jehovah jireh*, and *Gideon*'s *Jehovah shallum* were ascribed to him upon this reason. And sometimes you find the Lord stiles himself, The God that brought *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*: then the Lord Lord that brought them out of *Egypt*: then the Lord that gathered them out of the North Countrey: still minding them of the gracious providences which in all those places he had wrought for them.

Now there is a twofold reflection upon the *providential works of God*.

(i.) One entire and full, in the whole Complex and perfect frame thereof. This blessed sight is reserved for the perfect state. It is in that Mount of God, where we shall see both the *Wilderness* and *Canaan*: the glorious Kingdom into which we are come, and the way through which we were led into it. There the Saints shall have a ravishing view of that beautiful frame, and every part shall be distinctly discerned, as it had its particular use, and as it was connected with the other parts, and how effectually and orderly they all wrought to bring about that blessed design of their salvation, according to the promise, Rom. 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*, &c. For it is certain, no Ship at Sea keeps more exactly by the Compass which directs its course, than *Providence* doth by that *Promise*, which is its *Cynosura* and *Pole-star*.

When the records of Eternity shall be exposed to view, all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom looked into; how will it transport? when it shall be discerned, for, thus were the designs laid: here were the apt junctures and admirable dependencies of things, which then acted upon the stage of time, seem'd so perplexe and intricate, *Gowes Blessedness*, p. 76.

The

The other partial and imperfect in the way to glory, where we only view it in its single acts, or at most, in some branches and more observable course of actions. (2.

Betwixt these two is the same difference, as betwixt the sight of the dis-jointed wheels and scattered pins of a Watch, and the sight of the whole united in one frame, and working in one orderly motion: or, betwixt an ignorant Spectators viewing some more observable vessel or joint of a dissected body; and the accurate *Anatomist*'s discerning the course of all the veins and arteries of the body, as he follows the several branches of them through the whole, and plainly sees the proper places, figure, and use of each, with their mutual respect to one another.

O how ravishing and delectable a sight is that! to behold at one view the whole design of Providence, and the proper place, and use of every single act, which we could not understand in this world: for what Christ said to *Peter*, *John* 13.7. is as applicable to some providences in which we are now concerned, as it was to that particular action; *What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know it.* All the dark intricate puzling Providences at which we were sometimes so stumbled, and sometimes amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the promise, nor with each other; nay, which we so unjustly censured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite cross to our happiness: we shall then see to be unto us, as the difficult passage through the Wilderness was unto *Israel*, *the right way to a City of habitation*, Psalm 107.7.

And yet though our present views and reflections

upon Providence be so short and imperfect in comparison of that in Heaven, yet such as it is under all its present disadvantages, it hath so much excellency and sweetness in it, that I may call it a little Heaven, or as *Jacob* called his *Bethel, the Gate of Heaven.* 'Tis certainly an high way of walking with God in this world, and as sweet communion may a soul enjoy with him in his *Providences*, as in any of his *Ordinances*. How often have the hearts of its observers been melted into tears of joy, at the beholding of its wise and unexpected productions! How often hath it convinced them, upon a sober recollection of the events of their lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own counsels, they had as often been their own tormenters, if not executioners? Into what, and how many fatal mischiefs had they precipitated themselves, if Providence had been as short sighted as they? They have given it their hearty thanks, for considering their *Interest* more than their *importunity*, and not suffering them to perish by their own desires.

The benefits of adverting the works of Providence, are manifold and unspeakable; as in its place we shall shew you. But not to entangle the thread of the discourse, I shall cast it into this method.

First, I shall prove, that the Concernments of the Saints in this world, are certainly conducted by the Wisdom and care of special Providence.

Secondly, I will shew you, in what particular concernments of theirs this providential care is evidently discovered.

Thirdly, That it is the duty of Saints to advert, and heedfully observe these performances

of

of Providence for them in all their Concernments.

Fourthly, In what manner this duty is to be performed by them. (4.

Fifthly, What singular benefits result to them from such observations. (5.

And then apply the whole in such Uses, as offer themselves from the Point.

The first General Head.

First, I shall undertake the proof and defence of this great truth, *That the affairs of the Saints in this world are certainly conducted by the Wisdom and care of special Providence.* (1.

And herein I address my self with cheerfulness, to perform (as I am able) a service for that Providence, which hath throughout my life performed all things for me, as the Text speaks.

There is a twofold consideration of Providence according to its twofold Object, and manner of dispensation; the one is *general*, exercised about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other *special* and peculiar. Christ hath an universal Empire over all things, *Ephes.* 1. 22. the head of the whole World, by way of *dominion*; but an head to the Church; by way of *union* and *special influence*, John 17. 2. *the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe*, 1 Tim. 4. 10. The Church is his *special* care and charge; he rules the world for its good, as an head consulting the welfare of the body.

Heathens generally denied Providence, and no wonder, since they denied a God: for the same Arguments that prove one, will prove the other.

Aristotle the Prince of Heathen *Philosophers*, could not by the utmost search of reason, find out the Worlds original, and therefore concludes, it was from Eternity. The *Epicureans* did in a sort acknowledge a God, but yet denied a Providence, and wholly excluded him from any interest or concern in the affairs of the world, as being inconsistent with the felicity and tranquillity of the Divine Being to be diverted and cumbered with the care and labour of government. This assertion is so repugnant to reason, that it is a wonder themselves bluſht not at its absurdity; but I guess at the design, and one of them speaks it out in broad language. *Itaque imposuistis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & animadvertentem, & omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum & plenum negotii Deum? Vell. apud Cicer. de Natura Deorum.* They foresaw, that the concession of a Providence, would impose an eternal yoke upon their necks, by making them accountable for all they did to an higher Tribunal: and that they must necessarily pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, whilst all their thoughts, words and wayes were strictly noted and recorded, in order to an account by an All-seeing and righteous God: and therefore laboured to perswade themselves that was not, which they had no mind should be. But these Atheistical and fooliſh conceits fall flat before the undeniable evidence of this so great and clear a truth. Now,

My business here, is not so much to deal with professed *Atheists*, who deny the existence of God; and consequently deride all evidences brought from Scripture, of the extraordinary

events,

events, that fall out in favour of that people that are called His: but rather to convince those, that professedly own all this; yet never having tasted Religion by experience, suspect at least, that all these things which we call *special providences* to the Saints, are but *natural events*, or meer *contingencies*: and thus whilst they profess to own a God, and a Providence, (which profession is but the effect of their education) they do in the mean time live like *Atheists*; and both think and act, as if there were no such things: and really I doubt, this is the case of the far greatest part of the men of this generation.

But if it were indeed so, that the affairs of the World in general, and more especially those of the Saints, were not conducted by divine Providence, but (as they would perswade us) by the steady course of natural causes: beside which, if at any time we observe any event to fall out, it's meerly casual and contingent, or that which proceeds from some hidden and secret cause in nature: If this indeed were so, let them that are tempted to believe it, rationally satisfie the following demands.

First Demand.

How comes it to pass, that so many signal mercies and deliverances have befallen the people of God, above the power, and against the course of natural causes: to make way for which, there hath been a sensible suspension and stop put to the course of nature? It is most evident, that no natural effect can exceed the power of its natural cause. Nothing can give to another, more than

hath in it self: And it is as clear, that whatsoever acts naturally, acts necessarily: Fire burns *ad ultimum suis posse* to the uttermost of its power: Waters overflow, and drown all that they can. Lions and other rapacious and cruel Beasts, especially when hungry, tear and devour their prey: And for *Arbitrary* and rational Agents, they also act according to the principles and Laws of their natures. A wicked man when his heart is fully set in him, and his will stands in a full bent of resolution, will certainly (if he have power in his hand, and opportunity to execute his conceived mischief) give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked devices of his heart: for having once conceived mischief, and *travailing in pain with it* (according to the course of nature) he must *bring it forth*, as it is *Psal.* 7. 14. But if any of these inanimate, brutal, or rational agents, when there is no natural obstacle or *remora*, have their power suspended, and that when the effect is near the birth, and the design at the very article of execution, so that though they would, yet cannot hurt; to what think you is this to be assigned and referred? Yet so it hath often been seen, where Gods interest hath been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the event. The Sea divided it self in its own Channel, and made a wall of water, on each side, to give Gods distressed *Israel* a safe passage, and that not in a calm, but when the Waves thereof roared; * as it is *Isa.* 51. 15. The fire when blown up to the most intense and vehement flame, had no power to

pretence must serve the turn. That *Arabs* taking the advantage of a [illegible] to the *Egyptians*, passed over the people thereat: as [illegible] were better acquainted there, than the *Egyptians*

singe one hair of Gods faithfull Witnesses, when at the same instant it had power to destroy their intended *Executioners* at a greater distance, *Dan.* 3. 22. Yea, we find it hath some time been sufficient to consume, but not to torment the body; as in that known instance of blessed *Bayntam*, who told his Enemies, The flames were to him as a bed of Roses. The hungry Lions put off their natural fiercenesse, and became gentle and harmlesse, when *Daniel* was cast among them for a prey. The like account the Church Story gives us of *Polycarpe*, and *Dionysius Areopagita*, whom the fire would not touch, but stood after the manner of a Ship-man's sailfilled with the wind about them. *Acts and Mon. V.* p. 55.

Are these things according to the course and Law of Nature? To what secret natural cause, can they be ascribed? In like manner, we find the vilest, and fiercest of wicked men, have been withheld by an invisible hand of restraint from injuring the Lords people. By what secret cause in nature, was *Jeroboam*'s hand dried up, and made inflexible at the same instant it was stretched out against the Man of God? 1. *King.* 13. 4. No wild Beasts rend and devour their prey more greedily, than wicked men would destroy the people of God that dwell among them, were it not for this providential restraint upon them. So the *Psalmist* expresses his case in the words following my Text, *My soul is among Lyons, and I lye among them that are set on fire.* The *Disciples* were sent forth as Sheep into the midst of *Wolves*, *Mat.* 10. 16. It will not avail in this case to object, Those miraculous events depend only upon Scripture testimony, which the *Atheist* is not concluded by: for besides all that may be alledged for the Authority of that testi-

mony (which is needless to produce to men that own it) what is it less that every eye sees, or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak defenceless handful of men, wonderfully, and (except this way) unaccountably preserved from ruine in the midst of potent, enraged and truculent enemies, that faim would, but cannot destroy them; when as yet, no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot?

And if this pose us, what shall we say, when we see events produced in the world for the good of Gods chosen, by those very hands and means, which were intentionally imployed for their ruine? These things are as much beside the intentions of their enemies, as they are above their own expectations; yet such things are no rarities in the world. Was not the Envy of *Joseph*'s brethren, the cursed Plot of *Haman*, the Decree procured by the envy of the *Princes* against *Daniel*, with many more of the like nature, all turned by a secret and strange hand of providence, to their greater advancement and benefit: their Enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

Second Demand.

How is it (if the Saints Concerns are not ordered by a special divine Providence) *that natural causes unite and associate themselves for their relief and benefit in so strange a manner as they are found to do?* It is undeniably evident, that there are marvellous contingencies of Providence, confederating and agreeing as it were, to meet and unite themselves to bring about the good of Gods Chosen. There is

a like face of things shewing it self in divers places at that time, when any work for the good of the Church is come upon the stage of the world. As when the *Messiah* the capital mercy came to the *Temple*, then *Simeon* and *Anna* were brought thither by Providence, as witnesses to it. So in Reformation work, when the Images were pulled down in *Holland*, one and the same spirit of zeal possessed them in every *City* and *Town*, that the work was done in a night. He that heedfully reads the *History* of *Joseph*'s advancement to be the Lord of *Egypt*, may number in that story twelve remarkable acts or steps of Providence, by which he ascended to that honour and authority: if but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the Event had done so too: but every one fell in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the Churches deliverance from the plot of *Haman*, we find no less than seven acts of Providence concurring strangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and consent, to break that snare for them: one thing so aptly suiting with, and making way for another, that every heedful observer must needs conclude, this cannot be the effect of *casualty*, but wise *counsel*. Even as in viewing the accurate structure of the body of a man, the figure, position, and mutual respects of the several members and vessels hath convinced some, (and is sufficient to convince all) that it was the effect of divine Wisdom and power: in like manner, if the admirable adaptation of the means and instruments employed for mercy to the people of God be heedfully considered, who can but confess, that as there are tools of all sorts and

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sizes in the shop of Providence; so there is a most skilful hand that uses them, and that they could no more produce such effects of themselves, than the Ax, Saw, or Chisell can cut or carve a rude logg into a beautiful figure, without the hand of a skilful Artificer?

We find by manifold instances, that there certainly are strong combinations, and predispositions of persons and things, to bring about some issue and design for the benefit of the Church, which themselves never thought of: they hold no intelligence, communicate not their counsels to each other, yet meet together, and work together as if they did: which is, as if ten men should all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the same business, and that without any fore-appointment betwixt themselves; can any question, but such a meeting of means and instruments is certainly, though secretly over-ruled by some Wise invisible Agent?

Third Demand.

If the Concerns of Gods people be not governed by special Providence, *Whence is it, that the most apt and powerful means employed to destroy them, are rendered ineffectual, and weak contemptible means employed for their defence and comfort, crowned with success?* This could never be, if things were wholly swayed by the course of nature.

If we judge by that rule, we must conclude, the more apt and powerful the means are, the more successful and prosperous they must needs be; and where they are inept, weak,

and contemptible, nothing can be expected from them: thus reason layes it according to the rules of nature; but Providence crosses its hands, as *Jacob* did in blessing the Sons of *Joseph*, and orders quite contrary issues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy used by *Pharaoh* to destroy Gods *Israel*, that to the eye of reason, it was as impossible to survive it, as for crackling thorns to abide unconsumed amidst devouring flames; by which Emblem, their miraculous preservation is expressed, *Exod.* 3. 2. the bush was all in a flame, but no consumption of it. The Heathen *Roman* Emperours, who made the World tremble, and subdued the Nations under them, have employed all their power and policy against the poor, naked, defenceless Church, to ruine it; yet could not accomplish it, *Rev.* 12. 3, 4. O the Seas of blood that *Heathen Rome* shed in the ten persecutions! yet the Church lives, and when the Dragon gave his power to the Beast, *Rev.* 13. 2. (*i. e.*) the State of *Rome* became Antichristian, O what slaughters have been made by the Beast in all his dominions; so that the Holy Ghost represents him, as drunken with the blood of the Saints, *Rev.* 17. 6. And yet all will not do: the gates (*i. e.*) the powers and policies of Hell cannot prevail against it. How manifest is the care and power of Providence herein? Had half that power been imployed against any other people, it had certainly swallowed them up immediately, or in the hundredth part of the time worn them out. How soon was the *Persian* Monarchy swallowed up by the *Grecian*, and that again by the *Roman*? *Diocletian* and *Maximin* in the height of their persecution found themselves so baffled

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by Providence, that they both resigned the government, and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preservation God makes good that promise, Jer. 30. 11. *though I make a full end of all Nations, yet will I not make a full end of Thee:* and that in Isa. 54. 17. *no weapon formed against thee shall prosper.*

On the contrary, how successful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the Church? Thus in the first planting of Christianity in the world, by what weak and improbable instruments was it done? Christ did not chuse the eloquent *Orators*, or men of Authority in the Courts of *Kings* and *Emperours*, but twelve poor *Mechanicks*, and Fisher-men; and these not sent together in a troop, but some to take one Countrey to conquer it, and some another: the most ridiculous course (in appearance) for such a design as could be imagined; and yet in how short a time was the Gospel spread, and the Churches planted by them in the several Kingdoms of the world? This the *Psalmist* foresaw by the Spirit of Prophecy, when he said, *Out of the mouth of Babes and Sucklings hast thou ordained strength, to still the Enemy, and the Avenger*, Psal. 8. 2. At the sound of Rams horns *Jericho* is delivered into the hands of *Israel*: see *Josh.* 6. 20. By three hundred men with their Pitchers and Lamps, the huge host of *Midian* is discomfited, *Judges* 6. 19. The *Protestants* besieged in *Beziers* in *France* are delivered by a drunken *Drummer*, who going to his Quarters at midnight, rang the Alarm-Bell of the Town, not knowing what he did; and just then were their enemies making their assault. And as weak and improbable

have been blessed with success to the Church in general, so to the preservation of its particular members also. A Spider by weaving her web over the mouth of an Oven, shall hide a servant of Christ, *Du Moulin* from his Enemies, who took refuge there in that Bloody *Parisian* Massacre. A *Hen* shall sustain another many dayes at the same time, by lodging her egg every day, in the place where he had hid himself from the Cut-throats. Examples might be easily multiplied in the case; but the truth is too plain and obvious to the observation of all ages to need them. And can we but acknowledge a divine and special Providence over-ruling these matters, when we see the most apt and potent means for the Churches ruine frustrated, and the most silly and contemptible means succeeded and prospered for its good?

Fourth Demand.

If all things be governed by the course of nature, and force of natural causes, *How then comes it to pass, that men are turned (like a bowle by a rub) out of the way of evil, unto which they were driving on with full speed?* Good men have been engaged in the way to their own ruine, and knew it not; but Providence hath met them in the way and preserved them by strange diversions, the meaning of which they understood not, till the Event discovered it. *Paul* lay bound at *Cæsarea*, the *High Priest* and chief of the *Jews* request *Festus* that he might be brought bound to *Jerusalem*, having laid wait in the way to kill him; but *Festus* (though ignorant of the plot) utterly refuses

refuses it, but chuses rather to go with them to *Cæsarea*, and judge him there; by this rub, their bloody design is frustrated, *Acts* 25. 3, 4.

Possid. in vit. Aug. cap. 15. *Possidonius* in the life of *Augustine*, tells us, that the good Father going to teach the people of a certain Town, took a Guide with him, to shew him the way; the guide mistook the usual road, and ignorantly fell into a by-path, by which means he escaped ruine by the hands of the bloody *Donatists*, who knowing his intention way-laid him to kill him in the road.

Gen. 31. 24. And as memorable and wonderful are those rubs and diversions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts. *Laban* and *Esau* came against *Jacob* with mischievous purposes, but no sooner are they come nigh him, but the shackles of restraint are immediately clapt upon them both, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprizes. *Baalam* runs greedily for reward to curse *Israel*; but meets with an unexpected check at his very out-set, and though that stopt him not, but he essay'd every way to do them mischief, yet he still finds himself fetter'd by an effectual bond of restraint, that he can no way shake off, *Numb.* 22. 25, 38. *Saul* the High-Priest's Blood-hound, breaths out threatnings against the Church, and goes with a bloody commission towards *Damascus*, to hale the poor flock of Christ to the slaughter; but when he comes nigh the place, he meets an unexpected stop in the way, by which the mischief is not only diverted, but himself converted to Christ, *Acts* 9. 1, 2, 3, 4. Who can but see the finger of God in these things?

Fifth Demand.

If there be not an over-ruling Providence ordering all things for the good of Gods people, *How comes it to pass, that the good and evil which is done to them in this world, is accordingly repaid into the bosoms of them that are instrumental therein?*

1. How clear is it to every mans observation, that the kindnesses and benefits any have done to the Lords people, have been rewarded with full measure into their bosoms? The *Egyptian Midwives* refused to obey *Pharaoh*'s inhumane command, and saved the Male Children of *Israel*: for this the Lord dealt well with them, and built them houses, *Exod.* 1. 21. The *Shunamite* was hospitable, and careful for *Elisha*, and God recompenced it with the desirable enjoyment of a Son, 2 *Kings* 4. 9. 17. *Rahab* hid the Spies, and was exempted from the common destruction for it, *Heb.* 11. 31. *Publius* the chief man of the Island *Melita*, courteously received and lodged *Paul* after his shipwrack: the Lord speedily repaid him for that kindness, and healed his Father, who lay sick at that time of a Bloody Flux and Fever, *Acts* 28. 7, 8.——

In like manner, we find the evils done to Gods people have been repaid, by a just retribution to their enemies.

Si ab exordio mundi ad nostram usque memoriam perturramus historias, insignia divinæ ultionis in peccatores occurrent indicia. Alstedii Nat. Theol. p. 196.

Pharaoh and the *Egyptians* were cruel enemies to Gods *Israel*, and designed the ruine of their

poor

poor innocent babes; and God repaid it, in smiting all the first-born of *Egypt* in one night, *Exod.* 12. 29.

Haman erected a *Gallows* fifty Cubits high for good *Mordecai*, and God so ordered it, that himself and his ten Sons were hanged on it. And indeed it was but meet, that he should eat the fruit of that tree which himself had planted, *Esther* 7. 10.

Ahitophel plots against *David*, and gives counsel like an *Oracle*, how to procure his fall; and that very counsel, like a surcharged Gun, recoils upon himself, and procures his ruine: for seeing his good counsel rejected, (good politically, not morally,) it was now ease for him to guess at the issue, and so at his own fate, 2 *Sam.* 17. 23.

Charles the *Ninth* most inhumanely made the very Canals of *Paris* to stream with Protestant blood, and soon after he died miserably, his blood streaming from all parts of his body.

Stephen Gardiner, that burnt so many of Gods dear servants to ashes, was himself so scorched up by a terrible inflammation, that his very tongue was black and hung out of his mouth, and in dreadful torments ended his wretched dayes.

Maximinus that cruel *Emperour*, who set forth his *Proclamation* engraven in Brass, for the utter abolishing of the Christian Religion, was speedily smitten like *Herod*, with a dreadful judgement, swarms of Lice preying upon his Entrails, and causing such a stench, that his *Physicians* could not endure to come nigh him, and for refusing it were slain. Hundreds of like Instances might easily be produced, to confirm this Observation. And

who can but see by these things, that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the Earth?*

Yea, so exact have been the *retributions* of Providence to the Enemies of the Church, that not only the same persons, but the same members that have been the *instruments* of *mischief*, have been made the *subjects* of *wrath*.

The same *Arm* which *Jeroboam* stretched out to smite the Prophet, God smites. The *Emperour Aurelian* when he was ready to subscribe the *Edict* for the persecution of the *Christians*, was suddenly crampt in his *Knuckles*, that he could not write. *Euseb. l. cap. 29.*

Mr. *Greenhill* in his Exposition upon *Ezek.* 11. 13. tells his Auditory, that there was one then present in the Congregation, who was an eye-witness of a Woman scoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue stricken immediately with the Palsie, and died thereof within two dayes.

Henry the Second of *France* in a great rage against a *Protestant Counsellor*, committed him to the hands of one of his Nobles to be imprisoned, and that with these words, that *he would see him burned with his own eyes:* but mark the righteous providence of God, within a few dayes after, the same Noble man, with a Lance put into his hands by the *King*, did at a *Tilting match* run the said King into one of his eyes, whereof he dyed.

Yea, Providence hath made the very place of sinning, the place of punishment, 1 King. 21. 19. *In the place where Dogs licked the blood of* Naboth, *shall Dogs lick thy blood:* and it was exactly fulfilled, 2 *Kings* 9. 26. Thus *Tophet* is made a burying place for the Jews, till there was no room

to bury; and that was the place where they had offered up their Sons to *Moloch*, *Jer.* 7. 31, 32. The Story of *Nightingale* is generally known which Mr. *Fox* relates, how he fell out of the Pulpit and brake his neck, whilst he was abusing that Scripture, 1 *John* 1. 10.

And thus the Scriptures are made good by Providence, whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him, *Prov.* 26. 27. and *Matth.* 7. 2. with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

If. If any shall yet say, *These things may fall out casually: That many thousands of the Churches Enemies have dyed in peace, and their end been like other mens.*

We answer with *Augustine*, If no sin were punished here, no Providence would be believed; and if every sin should be punished here, no Judgement would be expected. But, that none may think these Events to be meerly casual and accidental, we yet further demand.

Sixth Demand.

If these things be meerly casual, *How is it that they square and agree so exactly with the Scriptures in all particulars?*

We read, Amos 3. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* If two men travel in one road, it's like they are agreed to go to the same place. Providences and Scriptures go all one way: and if they seem at any time to go diverse or contrary waies; be sure, they will meet at the journeys end. There is an agreement betwixt them to go to do.

Doth

Doth God miraculously suspend the power of natural Causes, as in the *first Demand* was opened? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizeth with the word, Isa. 43. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

Do natural Causes unite and associate themselves for the good of Gods people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the Promises, and is but the fulfilling of that Scripture, 1 Cor. 3. 22. *All is yours, for ye are Christs;* (*i.e.*) the use, benefit and service of all the Creatures is for you, as your need shall require.

Are the most apt and powerful means employed for their ruine frustrated? Who can but see the Scriptures fulfilled in, and expounded by such Providences? See *Isa.* 54. 15, 16, 17. and 8. 8, 9, 10. expounded by 2 *Kings* 18. 17. *& seq.*

See you at any time a rub of Providence diverting the course of good men from falling into evil, or wicked men from committing evil; how loudly do such Providences proclaim the truth and certainty of the Scriptures, which tell us, *That the way of man is not in himself, neither is it in him that walks to direct his steps,* Jer. 10. 23. and that in Prov. 16. 9. *A mans heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.*

Do you see adequate retributions made to those that injure or befriend the people of God? Why, when you see all the kindness and love they have shown the Saints returned with an

Overplus into their bosoms; how is it possible, but you must see the accomplishment of these Scriptures in such Providences? Isa. 32.8. 2 Cor. 9.6. *The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand.*

And when you see the evils men have done, or intended to do to the Lords people, recoiling upon themselves; he is perfectly blind, that sees not the harmony such Providences bear with these Scriptures, *Psal.* 140. 11, 12. *Psal.* 7. 14, 15, 16. *Psal.* 9. 16.

O what exact proportions do Providences and Scriptures hold! little do men take notice of it. Why did *Cyrus* contrary to all rules of State policy freely dismiss the Captives, but to fulfil that Scripture, *Isa.* 45. 13. So that it was well observed by One, That as God hath stretcht out the *Expansum* or Firmament over the natural; so he hath stretcht out his Word over the rational World. And as the Creatures on earth are influenced by those heavenly bodies, so are all Creatures in the World influenced by the Word, and do infallibly fulfil it, when they design to cross it.

Seventh Demand.

If these things be contingent, *How is it that they fall out in such remarkable nicks and junctures of time, which makes them so greatly observable to all that consider them?*

We find a multitude of Providences so timed to a minute, that had they fallen out never so little sooner or later, they had signified but little what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be casualty,

casualty, but counsel, that so exactly nicks the opportunity. Contingencies keep to no Rules.

contingentia rerum æstimanda est è causis proximis, secundis, & particularibus, non è causa prima, & universali, respectu cujus nihil contingens est, sed omnia necessaria, necessitate immutabilitatis non causæ. Wendelin. Theol. p. 183.

How remarkable to this purpose, was the tidings brought to *Saul*, that the *Philistines* had invaded the Land? 1 *Sam.* 23. 27. just as he was ready to grasp the prey. The Angel calls to *Abraham*, and shews him another Sacrifice, just when his hand was giving the fatal stroke to *Isaac*, *Gen.* 22. 10, 11. A Well of water is discovered to *Hagar*, just when she had left the Child, as not able to see its death, *Gen.* 21. 16, 19. *Rabshakeh* meets with a blasting Providence, hears a rumour that frustrated his design, just when ready to give the shock against *Jerusalem*, *Isa.* 27. 7, 8. So when *Haman*'s plot against the *Jews* was ripe, and all things ready for execution; *On that night could not the King sleep*, Esth. 6. 1. When the horns are ready to gore *Judah*, immediately *Carpenters* are prepared to fray them away, *Zech.* 1. 18, 19, 20, 21. How remarkable was the relief of *Rochell* by a *Shoal* of *Fish* that came into the *Harbour*, when they were ready to perish with famine, such as they never observed before, nor after that time. Mr. *Dod* could not go to bed one night, but hath a strong impulse to visit, (though unseasonably) a neighbour Gentleman, and just as he came, he meets him at his door, with an halter in his pocket, just going to hang himself. Dr. *Taylor* and his Wife in the *Irish Rebellion* flying through the Woods with a Sucking-

Child, which was just ready to expire; the Mother going to rest it upon a Rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm Milk, by which it was preserved. A good Woman (from whose mouth I received it) being driven to a great extremity, all supplies failing, was exceedingly plunged into unbelieving doubts and fears, not seeing whence supplies should come; when lo! in the nick of time, turning some things in a Chest, unexpectedly lights upon a piece of Gold, which supplied her present wants, till God opened another door of supply. If these things fall out casually, how is it, they observe the very nick of time so exactly? as that it is become proverbial in Scripture, Gen. 22. 14. *In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

Eighth Demand.

Lastly, *Were these things casual and contingent, how can it be, that they should fall out so immediately upon, and consonantly to the prayers of the Saints? So that in many Providences, they are able to discern a very clear answer to their prayers, and are sure they have the petitions they asked of him,* 1 John 5. 15.

Thus when the Sea divided it self, just upon *Israels* cry to Heaven, *Exod.* 14. 10. When so signal a victory is given to *Asa*, immediately upon that pathetical cry to Heaven, *Help us O Lord our God*, 2 Chron. 14. 11, 12. When *Ahitophel* shall go and hang himself, just upon that prayer of distressed *David*, 2 *Sam.* 15. 31. When *Haman* shall fall and his plot be broken, just upon the Fast kept by *Mordecai* and *Hester*, *Esth.* 4. 16.

Our own *Speed*, in his History of *Britain*, tells us, that *Richard* the First besieged a Castle with his Army, they offered to surrender, if he would save their lives; he refuses, and threatens to hang them all: upon this an *Arbalaster* charged his Bow with a square Arrow, making first his prayer to God, that he would direct the shot, and deliver the Innocent from oppression; it struck the *King* himself, whereof he dyed, and they were delivered. *Abraham*'s servant prayed for success; and see how it was answered, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Peter* was cast into prison, and prayer was made for him by the Church, and see the event, *Acts* 12. 5, 6, 7, 12. I could easily add to these, the wonderful examples of the return of prayers which was observed in *Luther*, and Dr. *Winter* in *Ireland*, and many more; but I judge it needless, because most Christians have a stock of experience of their own, and are well assured, that many of the Providences that befal them are, and can be no other than the return of their prayers.

And now who can be dissatisfied in this point, that wisely considers these things? Must we not conclude as it is, Job 36. 7. *He withdraweth not his eye from the Righteous:* and as 2 Chron. 16. 9. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.* His providences proclaim him to be a God hearing prayers.

The Second General Head,

HAving proved, That the Concernments of the Saints in this World, are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special Providence; my next work is to shew you, *In what Affairs and Concerns of theirs, the Providence of God doth more especially appear; or what are the most remarkable performances of Providence for them in this world.*

And here I am not led directly by my Text, to speak of the most internal and spiritual performances of Providence, immediately relating to the souls of his people; though they all relate to their souls mediately and eventually; but of the more visible and external performances of Providence for them: and it is not to be supposed, I should touch all these neither; they are more than the sands; but that which I aim at, is to discourse to you some more special and more observable performances of Providence for you. And we shall begin at the beginning,

The first Performance of Providence.

I.

AND First, Let us consider, how well Providence hath performed the first work that ever it did for us, in our *formation* and *protection* in the *womb*. Certainly, this is a very glorious and admirable performance; it's that the *Psalmist* admires, Psal. 139. 15. *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth.* The Womb is so called upon this account, because as curious Artists, when they have some choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and then bring it into the light for all to gaze at; so it was here. And there are two things admirable in this performance of Providence for us.

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The rare structure and excellent composition of the body; *I am wonderfully made*; that word *Rachamti*——is very full. The Vulgar renders it, *painted as with a needle*, (*i. e.*) richly embroidered with nerves and veins. Oh the curious workmanship that is in that one part the eye! How hath it forced some to acknowledge a God upon the examination of it! Providence, when it went about this work, had its model or pattern before it, according to which it molded every part, as it is, Ver. 16. *In thy Book were all my members written.* Hast thou an integral perfection and fulness of members? It is because he wrote them all in his Book, or limned out the

body, according to that exact model which he drew of thee in his own gracious purpose, before thou hadst a being: Had an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot been wanting in the platform, thou hadst now been sadly sensible of the defect: this world had been but a dungeon to thee, without those windows: thou hadst lived, as many do, an object of pity to others: if thou have low thoughts of this mercy, ask the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb, the value and worth of those mercies, and they will tell thee. There is a world of cost bestowed upon thy very body. Thou mightest have been cast into another mould, and created a Worm or a Toad. I remember *Luther* tells us of two *Cardinals*, riding in great pomp to the Council of *Constance*, and by the way they heard a man in the fields bitterly weeping and wailing: when they came to him, they found him intently viewing an ugly *Toad*; and asking him, why he wept so bitterly, he told them, his heart was melted with this consideration, that God had not made him such a loathsome and deformed Creature; *hoc est quod amarè fleo*, said he: whereupon one of them cryes out, Well said the Father, *Surgunt indocti, & rapiunt Cœlum*, The unlearned will rise and take Heaven, and we with all our learning shall be cast into Hell. No part of the *Common lump* was so figured and polisht as *man* is. *Galen* gave *Epicurus* an hundred years time to imagine

Veins carry the natural Spirits from the Liver, the Arteries the vi- Spirits from the Heart, the Nerves the animal Spirits from the ...: other members are *official*, as the hands and feet: the superi- doth rule the inferiour, and the inferiour support the superiour; ... but thou made them all.

a more commodious ſcituation, configuration, or compoſition of any one member of a humane body. And if all the *Angels* had ſtudied to this day, they could not have caſt the body of *man* into a more curious mould.

And yet all this is but the enamelling of the Caſe, or poliſhing the Casket wherein the rare Jewel lies. Providence hath not only built the houſe, but brought the Inhabitant (I mean the ſoul) into the poſſeſſion of it. A glorious piece it is, that bears the very Image of God upon it, being all in all, and all in every part. How noble are its Faculties and Affections? How nimble, various and indefatigable are its Motions? How comprehenſive is its Capacity? It's a Companion for *Angels*, nay, capable of Eſpouſals to *Chriſt*, and eternal Communion with God. It's the Wonder of Earth, and the Envy of Hell. (2.)

Suppoſe now (and why ſhould you not ſuppoſe, what you ſo frequently behold in the world?) that Providence had ſo permitted and ordered it, that thy ſoul had entered into thy body with one or two of its faculties wounded and defective: Suppoſe its *Underſtanding* had been crackt; what a miſerable life hadſt thou lived in this world? neither capable of *ſervice* nor *comfort*. And truly, when I have conſidered thoſe works of Providence, in bringing into the world in all Countreys and Ages ſome ſuch ſpectacles of pity; ſome deprived of the uſe of reaſon, and differing from Beaſts, in little more than ſhape and figure; and others, though ſound in their underſtandings, yet deformed or defective in their bodies, monſtrous, miſhapen and loathſome Creatures; I can reſolve the deſign of this

Providence, into nothing beſide a demonſtration of his Soveraign power; except they be deſigned as foils, to ſet off the beauty of other rare and exquiſite pieces, and intended to ſtand before your eyes, as Monitors of Gods mercy to you, that your hearts (as oft as you beheld them) might be melted into thankfulneſs for diſtinguiſhing favour to you.

Look then (but not proudly) upon thy outſide and inſide, ſee and admire what Providence hath done for thee, and how well it hath *performed* the firſt ſervice that ever it did for thee in this world. And yet, this was not all it did for thee, before thou ſaweſt this world. It preſerved thee, as well as formed thee in the womb: elſe thou hadſt been as thoſe *Embryo's Job* ſpeaks of, Job 3. 11, 12. *that never ſaw the light. Abortives* go for nothing in the world, and there are multitudes of them, ſome that never had a reaſonable ſoul breathed into them; but only the rudiments, and rough draught of a body: theſe come not into the account of men, but periſh as the Beaſt doth. Others that dye in, or ſhortly after they come out of the Womb: and though their life was but for a moment; yet that moment entails an Eternity upon them: and had this been your caſe, as it is the caſe of Millions, then (ſuppoſing your ſalvation) yet had you been utterly unſerviceable to God in the world: None had been the better for you, nor you the better for any in the world. You had been utterly uncapable of all that good which throughout your life you have either done to others, or received from others.

And if we conſider the nature of that obſcure

life we lived in the womb; how ſmall an accident (had it been permitted by Providence) had extinguiſhed our life, like a Bird in the ſhell? We cannot therefore but admire the tender care of Providence over us, and ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 139. 13. *Thou haſt covered me in my Mothers womb:* and not only ſo, but as it is, Pſal. 22. 9. *Thou art he that took me out of my Mothers womb.* He preſerved thee there to the fulneſs of time, and when that time was come, brought thee ſafely through manifold hazards, into that place in the world which he from Eternity eſpied for thee. Which leads us to the ſecond performance.

The Second Performance of Providence.

II.

Providential performance with reſpect to the time and place of our Nativity.

THe ſecond great performance of Providence, for the people of God, reſpects the place, and time in which it ordered their Nativity to fall. And truly, this is no ſmall concernment to every one of us, but of vaſt conſequence, either to our good or evil, though it be little minded by moſt men. I am perſwaded, the thoughts of few Chriſtians penetrate deep enough into this Providence, but ſlide too ſlightly and ſuperficially over an Abyſſe of much mercy, rich and manifold mercy wrapt up in this gracious *performance* of Providence for them.

Ah friends! can you think it an indifferent thing, into what part of the World the womb of Nature had caſt you out? Is there no odds, upon what Spot of the Creation, or in what Age of the World your lot had fallen? It may be you have

have not seriously bethought your selves about this matter. And because this Point is so seldom toucht, I will therefore dive a little more particularly and distinctly into it, and endeavour to warm your affections with a representation of the many and rich benefits you owe to this one *performance* of *Providence* for you.

And we will consider it under a double respect or relation, as it respects your present comfort in this world, and as it relates to your eternal happiness in the world to come.

1.) This performance of Providence for you, doth very much concern your *present comfort* in this world. All the rooms in this great house are not alike pleasant and commodious for the Inhabitants of it. You read *Psal.* 74. 20. of *the dark places of the Earth*, which *are full of the habitations of cruelty*: and many such dismal places are found in the habitable Earth. What a vast tract of the world lies as a waste Wilderness?

Suppose your Mothers had brought you forth in *America*, among the *Salvage Indians*, who herd together as brute beasts; are scorched with heat, and starved with cold; being naked, destitute and defenceless. How poor, miserable and unprovided of Earthly comforts and accommodations, are many Millions of the Inhabitants of this world? What mercies do you enjoy in respect of the amænity, fertility, temperature and civility of the place of your habitation? What is it but a Garden inclosed out of a Wilderness? I may without partiality or vanity say, God hath (even upon temporal accounts) provided you with one of the healthfullest, pleasantest, and in all respects, the best furnished room in all the great

great house of this world. Hear what our own *Chronicler* saith of it, *It is the fortunate Isle, the Paradise of pleasure, the Garden of God; whose Valleys are like* Eden, *whose Hills are as* Lebanon, *whose Springs are as* Pisgah, *whose Rivers are as* Jordan, *whose Wall is the Ocean, and whose Defence is the* Lord Jehovah. *Speed's Chron.

You are here provided of necessary and comfortable accommodations for your bodies, that a great part of the world are unacquainted with. It is not with the poorest among us, as it is said to be with the poor *Russians*, whose poverty pinches and bites with such sharp teeth, that their poor cry at the doors, *Give me and cut me, give me and kill me.*

Say not, The barbarous Nations in this excel you; that they possess the *Mines* of Silver and Gold, which it may be you think enough to salve all other inconveniences of life. Alas poor Creatures! better had it been for them, if their Countrey had brought forth *Bryers* and *Thorns* instead of *Gold, Silver*, and *precious stones*; for this hath been the occasion of ruining all their other comforts in this world: this hath invited their cruel avaritious enemies among them, under whose servitude they groan, and dye without mercy: and thousands of them have chosen death rather than life, on the terms they enjoyed it. And why might not your lot have fallen there as well as where it is? Are not they made of the same clay, and endowed with as good a nature as your selves? O what a distinction hath Divine Mercy made, where Nature made none! Consider ungrateful man, thou mightest have fallen into some of those Regions, where a tainted air

air frequently cloyes the jaws of death, where the Inhabitants differ very little from the Beasts in the manner of their living: but God hath provided for thee, and given the poorest among us far better accommodations of life, than the greatest among them are ordinarily provided with. O what hath Providence done for you?

(2.) But all that I have said is very inconsiderable, in comparison with the *spiritual mercies*, and advantages you here enjoy for your souls. Oh, this is such an advantageous cast of Providence for you, as obliges you to a thankful acknowledgement of it, to all Eternity. For let us here make but a few suppositions in the case before us, and the glory of Providence will shine like a Sun-beam full in your faces.

(1.) Suppose it had been your Lot to have fallen in any of those vast *Continents* possessed by *Pagans* and *Heathens* at this day, who bow down to the Stock of a Tree, and worship the Host of Heaven. This is the case of Millions, and Millions of Millions: for *Pagan Idolaters* (as that searching Scholar Mr. *Brierwood* informs us) do not only fill the circumference of nine hundred miles in *Europe*, but almost the one half of *Africa*, more than the half of *Asia*, and almost the whole of *America*.

...rierwoods ...quiries, ...ap. 13. ...118,119

Oh how deplorable had thy case been, if a *Pagan Idolatress* had brought thee forth, and Idolatry had been suckt in with thy Mothers milk! then in all probability, thou hadst been at this day worshipping *Devils*, and posting with full speed in the direct road to Damnation: for these are the people of Gods wrath, Jer. 10. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee*

not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name. How dreadful is that imprecation against them? *Psal.* 79. 7. which takes hold of them and all that's theirs, *Confounded be all they that serve graven Images, that boast themselves of Idols.*

(2.) Or suppose your Lot had fallen among *Mahometans*, who next to Pagans spread over the greatest tract of the Earth: for though *Arabia* bred that unclean Bird, yet it was not that Cage, that could long contain him; for, not only the *Arabians*, but the *Persians*, *Turks* and *Tartars*, do all bow down their backs under that grand Impostor. This poison hath dispersed it self through the veins of *Asia*, over a great part of *Africk*, even the Circumference of seven thousand miles, and stops not there, but hath tainted a considerable part of *Europe* also.

Had your Lot fallen here, O what unhappy men and women had you been, notwithstanding the natural amenity and pleasantness of your native soil? You had then adored a *grand Impostor*, and dyed in a fools *Paradise*. Instead of Gods lively *Oracles*, you had been (as they now are) deceived to your eternal ruine with such fond, mad and wild dreams, as whoso considers would think, the *Authors* had more need of manacles and fetters, than arguments or sober answers.

(3.) Or if neither of these had been your Lot, but you had been emptied by the womb of Nature into this little spot of the Earth which is *Christianized* by profession, but nevertheless for the most part over-run by *Popish Idolatry*, and *Antichristian* delusions; what unhappy men and women had you been, had you suckt a Popish breast? For this people are to be the subjects of

the *Vials* of Gods wrath to be poured out successively upon them, as you may read *Rev.* 16. and the Scriptures in round and plain language tell us, what their fate must be, 2 Thess. 2. 11, 12. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Nay, you might have fallen into the same *Land* in which your habitation now is, and yet have had no advantage by it as to salvation, if he that chose the bounds of your habitations, had not also graciously determined the times for you, *Acts* 17. 26. For,

(4.) Suppose your Lot had fallen where it is during the *Pagan* State of *England*, who for many hundred years were gross and vile Idolaters. Thick darkness over-spread the people of this *Island*, and as in other Countreys, the *Devil* was worshipped, and his lying Oracles zealously attended upon.

The shaking of the top of *Jupiter's* Oak in *Dodona*, the Caldron smitten with the rod in the hand of *Jupiter's* Image, the *Laurell* and *Fountain* in *Daphne*: these were the Ordinances on which the poor deluded Wretches waited. So in this Nation they worshipped Idols also: the Sun and Moon were adored for Gods, with many other abominable Idols which our Ancestors worshipped, and whose memorials are not to this day quite obliterated among us.

(5.) Or suppose our Lot had fallen in those later miserable dayes, in which *Queen Mary* sent so many hundreds to Heaven in a fiery Chariot, and the poor *Protestants* stalked up and down in

holes and woods, to preserve them from *Popish Inquisitors*, who like Blood-hounds, hunted up and down through all the Cities, Towns and Villages of the Nation, to seek out the poor sheep of Christ for a prey.

But such hath the special care of Providence towards us been, that our turn to be brought upon the stage of this World was graciously reserved for better dayes: so that if we had had our own option, we could not have chosen for our selves, as Providence hath. We are not only furnished with the best room in this great house; but before we were put into it, it was swept with the beesom of National Reformation, from *Idolatry*, yea, and washed by the blood of *Martyrs* from Popish filthiness; and adorned with Gospel lights, shining in as great lustre in our dayes, as ever they did since the *Apostles* dayes. You might have been born in *England* for many Ages, and not have found a *Christian* in it; yea, and since *Christianity* was here owned; and not have met a *Protestant* in it. Oh what an Obligation hath Providence laid you under, by such a merciful performance as this for you?

If you say, *All this indeed is true; but what is this to eternal salvation? Do not multitudes that enjoy these privileges, starvedly perish notwithstanding them? yea, and perish with an aggravation of sin and misery beyond other sinners?* Object.

True, they do so; and it is of very sad consideration that it should be so; but yet we cannot deny this to be a very choice and singular mercy, to be born in such a Land, and at such a Time. For let us consider what helps for salvation men here enjoy, beyond what they could enjoy, had Sol.

their Lot fallen according to the fore-mentioned suppositions.

(1.) Here we enjoy the ordinary means of salvation, which elsewhere men are denyed and cut off from. So that if any among the *Heathens* be saved and brought to *Christ*, it must be in some miraculous or extraordinary way: for, *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14. Alas! were there a desire awakened in any of their hearts after a Gospel discovery of salvation, (which ordinarily is not, nor can be rationally supposed) yet, poor Creatures, they might travel from Sea to Sea, to hear the Word, and not find it: whereas you can hardly miss the opportunities of hearing the Gospel: Sermons meet you frequently, so that you can scarcely shun or avoid the Ordinances and Instruments of your salvation. And is this nothing? Christ even forces himself upon us.

(2.) Here, in this Age of the World, the common prejudices against Christianity are removed, by the advantage it hath of a publick profession among the people, and protection by the Laws of the Countrey. Whereas, were your habitation among *Jews*, *Mahometans*, or *Heathen Idolaters*, you would find *Christ* and *Christianity* the common *odium* of the Countrey, every one defying and deriding both name and thing; and such your selves likely had been, if your birth and education had been among them. For you may observe, that whatever is πατροπαράδοτον traditionally delivered down from Father to Son, every one is fond of, and zealous in its defence. The *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* are at this

day so tenacious of their errors, that with spitting, hissing, and clapping of hands, and all other signs of indignation and abhorrence they chase away all others from among them.

Is it not then a special mercy to you to be cast into such a Countrey and Age, where (as a learned Divine observes) the true Religion hath the same advantages over every false one, as in other Countreys they have over it? Here you have the presence of precious Means, and the absence of soul-destroying prejudices, two signal mercies. Mr. Pink

(3.) Here, in this Age of the World, Christianity bespeaks you assoon as you are capable of any sense, or impressions of Religion upon you; and so by an happy *anticipation*, blocks up the passages, by which a false Religion would else certainly enter. Here you suck in the first notions and principles of Christianity, even with the Mothers milk: and certainly, such a prepossession is a choice advantage. *Quo semel est imbuta, recens servabit odorem Testa diu.* *Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* Prov. 22. 6.

(4.) Here you have, or may have the help and assistance of Christians to direct your way, resolve your doubts, support your burthens, and help you through those difficulties that attend the new birth. Alas! if a poor soul had any beginnings or faint workings and stirrings after Christ and true Religion in many other Countreys, the hand of every man would presently be against him, and none would be found to relieve, assist or encourage, as you may see in that Example of *Saracius*: the neerest relations would, in that

case, prove the greatest Enemies, the Countrey would quickly hoot at him as a Monster, and cry Away with the *Heretick* to the Prison or Stake.

Whether these eventually prove blessings to your souls or no, certain I am, that in themselves they are singular mercies, and helps to salvation, that are denyed to Millions besides you. So that if *Plato* when he was near his death, could bless God for three things, *viz.* That he was a Man, and not a Beast: that he was born in *Greece*, and brought up in the time of *Socrates*: much more cause have you to admire Providence, that you are Men, and not Beasts; that you were born in *England*, and brought up in Gospel dayes here, This is a Land the Lord hath *Espied* for you, as the expression is, *Ezek.* 20. 6. and concerning it, you have abundant cause to say, as in another case the *Psalmist* doth, Psal. 16. 6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage.*

The Third Performance of Providence.

III.

THe next observable Performance of Providence, *which must be heedfully adverted and weighed, is the designation of the stock and family out of which we should spring and rise.* And truly, this is of special consideration, both as to our temporal and eternal good; for whether the families in which we grew up, were great or small in *Israel*; whether our parents were of the higher or lower *Class*, and rank among men; yet if they

were such as feared God and wrought righteousness, if they took any care to educate you religiously, and trained you up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, you are bound to reckon it among your chief mercies, that you sprung from the loins of such parents: for from this Spring a double stream of mercy rises to you.

(1.) Temporal and external mercies to your outward man. You cannot but know, that as Godliness entails a blessing, so wickedness and unrighteousness a curse upon posterity. An instance of the former you have in *Gen.* 17. 18, 20. On the contrary, you have the threatning, *Zech.* 5. 4. and both together, Prov. 3. 33. *The Curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he Blesseth the habitation of the just.* True it is, that both these imply the Childrens treading in the steps of their *Parents*, according to *Ezek.* 18. but how frequently is it seen, that wicked men breed their children vainly and wickedly; so that as it's said of *Abijam*, 1 Kings 15. 3. *He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him*; and so the curse is entail'd from generation to generation. To escape this Curse, is a choice Providence.

(2.) But especially take notice, what a stream of *spiritual blessings* and mercies, flows from this Providence to the Inner man. O it's no common mercy, to descend from pious Parents; Some of us do not only owe our natural life to them, as Instruments of our Beings, but our Spiritual and Eternal life also. It was no small mercy to *Timothy*, to be descended from such Progenitors, 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. nor to *Augustine*, that he had such a Mother as *Monica*, who planted in his mind the

precepts of life with her Words, watered them with her Tears, and nourished them with her Example. We will a little more particularly inspect this mercy, and in so doing, we shall find manifold mercies contained in it.

(1.) What a Mercy was it to us, to have Parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our Infancy, when we could not pray for our selves? Thus did *Abraham*, *Gen.* 15. 2. and *Hannah*, 1 *Sam.* 1. 10, 11. and some here likely are the fruits and returns of their *Parents* Prayers. This was that holy course they continued all their dayes for you, carrying all your concerns, especially your Eternal ones before the Lord with their own; and pouring out their souls to God so affectionately for you, when their eye-strings and heart-strings were breaking. Oh put a value upon such Mercies; for they are precious. It's a greater Mercy, to descend from praying Parents, than from the loyns of Nobles. See *Job*'s pious practice, *Job* 1. 5.

(2.) What a special Mercy was it to us, to have the excrescencies of corruption nipt in the bud by their pious and careful discipline? We now understand, what a critical and dangerous season Youth is, the wonderful proclivity of that Age to every thing that is evil. Why else are they called Youthful lusts? 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. When *David* asketh, *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?* it's plainly enough implyed in the very Question, that the way he takes lieth through the pollutions of the world in his youth, *Psal.* 119. 9. When you find a *David* praying, that God would *not remember the sins of his youth*, Psal. 25. 7. and a *Job* bitterly complaining, that God

made

made him to possess the sins of his youth, Job 13. 26. Sure, you cannot but reflect, with a very thankful heart, upon those happy means, by which the corruption of your nature was happily prevented, or restrained in your Youth.

(3.) And how great a Mercy was it, that we had Parents, who carefully instilled the good knowledge of God into our souls in our tender years? How careful was *Abraham* of this duty? *Gen.* 18. 19. and *David*? 1 *Chron.* 28. 9. We have some of us had Parents, who might say to us, as the *Apostle*, Gal. 4. 19. *My little Children, of whom I travail again in birth till Christ be formed in you.* As they longed for us before they had us, and rejoyced in us when they had us; so they could not endure to think, that when they could have us no more, the Devil should. As they thought no pains, care or cost too much for our bodies to feed them, cloath and heal them; so did they think no prayers, counsels or tears, too much for our souls, that they might be saved. They knew a parting time would come betwixt them and us, and did strive to make it as easie and comfortable to them as they could, by leaving us in *Christ*, and within the blessed bond of his Covenant.

They were not glad, that we had Health, and indifferent whether we had Grace.

They as sensibly felt the miseries of our souls as of our bodies; and nothing was more desirable to them, than that they might say in the great day, Lord, here am I, and the Children which thou hast given me.

(4.) And was it not a special Favour to us, to have *Parents* that went before us as Patterns of Holi-

Holiness, and beat the path to Heaven for us by their Examples? Who could say to us, as Phil. 4. 9. *What things ye have heard and seen in me, those do*; and as 1 Cor. 11. 1. *Be ye followers of us, as we are of Christ.* The *Parents* life is the *Childs* copy. O 'tis no common mercy, to have a fair copy set before us, especially in the moulding age: we saw what they did, as well as heard what they said. It was *Abrahams* commendation, that he commanded his Children, and his household *after him*, to keep the way of the Lord. And such mercies some of us have had also.

Ah my friends, let me beg you, that you will set special remarques upon this Providence, which so graciously wrought for you: and that your hearts may be more throughly warmed in the sense of it, compare your condition with others, and seriously bethink your selves,

(1.) How many Children there be among us, that are drawn headlong to Hell by their cruel and ungodly Parents, who teach them to curse and swear assoon as they can speak? Many families there are, wherein little other language is heard, but what is the Dialect of Hell. These, like the old logs and small spray, are preparing for the fire of Hell, where they must burn together. Of such Children, that Scripture, *Psal.* 49. 19. will one day be verified, except they repent, *They shall go to the generation of their fathers, where they shall not see light.*

(2.) And how many families are there, though not so prophane, who yet breed up their Children vainly and sensually, as *Job* 21. 11, &c. take no care what becomes of their souls, so they can but provide for their bodies? If they can but

teach

teach them to carry their bodies, no matter if the Devil act their souls: If they can but leave them Lands or Moneys, they think they have very fully discharged their duties. O what will the language be, wherewith such Parents and Children shall greet each other at the Judgement Seat, and in Hell for ever?

(3.) And how many be there, who are more *sober*, and yet hate the least appearances of Godliness in their *Children?* who instead of cherishing, do all that they can to break bruised reeds, and quench smoaking flax, to stifle and strangle the first appearances, and offers they make towards Christ? Who had rather accompany them to their *graves*, than to *Christ*, doing all that in them lyes, *Herod* like, to kill *Christ* in the *Cradle?* Ah Sirs, ye little know, what a mercy ye do or have enjoyed in Godly Parents, and what a good Lot Providence cast for you in this Concernment of your bodies and souls.

If any shall say, *This was not their case, they had little help Heaven-ward from their Parents:* To such I shall only reply three things. *Object.*

(1.) If you had little furtherance, yet own it as a special Providence, that you had no hinderance; or, if you had opposition, yet *Sol.*

(2.) Admire the Grace of God, in plucking you out by a wonderful distinguishing hand of mercy from among them, and keeping alive the languishing sparks of Grace amidst the floods of opposition.

(3.) And learn from hence, if God give you a posterity of your own, to be so much the more strict and careful of relational duties, by how much you have sensibly felt the want of it in your selves.

But

But seeing such a train of blessings, both as to this life, and that to come, follow upon an holy education of Children; I will not dismis the Point, till I have discharged my duty, in exhorting Parents and Children to their duties.

(1.) And first for you that are *Parents*, or to whom the Education of Children is committed, I beseech you mind, how concerning a duty lies on you: and that I may effectually press it, consider, (1.) How near the Relation is betwixt you and your Children, and therefore how much you are concerned in their happiness or misery. Consider but the Scripture account of the dearness of such Relations, expressed (1.) By longings for them, as *Gen.* 15. 2. *Gen.* 30. 1. and (2.) By our joy when we have them, as Christ expresses it, *John* 16. 21. (3.) The high value set on them, *Gen.* 42. 38. (4.) The sympathie with them in all their troubles, *Mark* 9. 22. and (5.) By our sorrow at parting, *Gen.* 37. 35. Now shall all this be to no purpose? For to what purpose do we desire them before we have them, rejoice in them when we have them, value them so highly, sympathize with them so tenderly, grieve for their death so excessively; if in the mean time no care be taken what shall become of them to Eternity?

(2.) How God hath charged you with their souls, as well as bodies: and this appears by two sorts of Precepts. (1.) Precepts directly laid upon you, *Deut.* 6. 6, 7. and *Eph.* 6. 4. (2.) By Precepts laid on them to obey you, *Eph.* 6. 1. which plainly implies your duty, as well as expresses theirs.

(3.) What shall comfort you at the parting

time,

time, if they dye through your neglect in a Christless condition? Oh this is the cutting consideration, My *Child* is in *Hell*, and I did nothing to prevent it; I helped him thither. Duty discharged, is the only root of comfort in that day.

(4.) If you neglect to instruct them in the way of *Holiness*, will the Devil neglect to instruct them in the way of *Wickedness*? No, no, if you will not teach them to *pray*, he will to *curse*, *swear* and *lye*. If ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring.

(5.) If the season of their youth be neglected, how little probability is there of any good fruit afterwards? that is the Moulding age, *Prov.* 22. 6. How few are converted in old age? A twig is brought to any form, but grown limbs will not bow.

(6.) You are instrumental causes of all their spiritual misery; and that (1.) By *generation*, (2.) *Imitation*, they lye spiritually dead of the Plague which you brought home among them, Psal. 51. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my Mother conceive* (or warm) *me.*

(7.) There's none in the World so likely as you, to be Instruments of their Eternal good. You have peculiar advantages that none other hath; as (1.) The interest you have in their affections. (2.) Your opportunities to instil the knowledge of Christ into them, being daily with them, *Deut.* 6. 7. (3.) Your knowledge of their tempers: if therefore you neglect, who shall help them?

(8.) The consideration of the great day, should move your bowels of pity for them. O

remember that Text, Rev. 20. 12, &c. *I saw the dead small and great stand before God.* What a sad thing will it be, to see your dear Children at Christs left hand? O friends, do your utmost to prevent this misery. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perswade men.*

(2.) And you *Children*, especially you that sprang from religious *Parents*, I beseech you, obey their Counsels, and tread in the steps of their pious Examples. To press this, I offer these Considerations.

(1.) Your disobedience to them, is a resisting of Gods Authority, Ephes. 6. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord*: there's the Command: your rebellion therefore runs higher than you think. It is not Man, but God that you disobey; and for your disobedience God will punish you. It may be, their tenderness will not suffer them, or you are grown beyond their correction: all they can do, is to complain to God; and if so, he will handle you more severely than they could do.

(2.) Your Sin is greater than the Sin of young *Heathens* and *Infidels*; and so will your Account be also. O better (if a wicked Child) that thou hadst been the off-spring of Salvage *Indians*, nay, of Beasts, than of such Parents. So many Counsels disobeyed, Hopes and Prayers frustrated, will turn to sad aggravations.

(3.) It's usual with God, to retaliate mens disobedience to their Parents in kind: Commonly our own Children shall pay us home for it. I have read in a grave *Author*, of a wicked Wretch that drag'd his Father along the house; the Father begg'd him, not to draw him beyond

such a place: for, said he, I drag'd my Father no farther. O the sad, but just retributions of God!

And for you, in whose hearts Grace hath been planted by the blessing of Education, I beseech you to admire Gods goodness to you in this *Providence*. Oh what an happy Lot hath God cast for you! How few Children are partakers of your mercies?

See that you honour such Parents; the tie is double upon you so to do. Be you the joy of their hearts, and comfort of their lives, if living: if not, yet still remember the mercy while *you* live, and tread in their pious path; that you and they may both rejoice together in the great day, and bless God for each other to all Eternity.

The Fourth Performance of Providence.

IV.

THE next remarkable performance of Providence for the People of God in which I will instance, shall be with respect to its ordering the Occasions, Instruments and Means of their Conversion.

Providential performance about our Conversion to God.

In nothing doth Providence shine forth more gloriously in this world, than it doth in this performance for the people of God. How curiously soever its hand had moulded your bodies, how tenderly soever it had preserved them, and how bountifully soever it had provided for them; if it had not also ordered some means or other for your Conversion, all the former favours and benefits it had done for you, had signified little. This, O this

this is the most excellent benefit you ever receiv-
ed from its hand. You are more beholden to it
for this, than for all your other mercies. And
in opening this performance of Providence, I
cannot but think your hearts must be deeply af-
fected. This is a subject which every gracious
heart loves to steep its thoughts in. It's cer-
tainly the sweetest History that ever they re-
peated: they love to think and talk of it. The
Places where, and Instruments by whom this work
was wrought, are exceedingly endeared to them
for the works sake: yea, endeared to that degree,
that for many years after their hearts have melt-
ed, when they have but passed occasionally by
those places, or but seen the faces of those per-
sons, that were used as Instruments in the hand
of Providence for their good. As no doubt, but
Gen. 48. 3. *Jacob's *Beth-el* was ever after that night sweet
to his thoughts: so other Saints have had their
Bethels as well as he. O blessed Places, Times and
Instruments! O the deep, the sweet impressions,
never to be razed out of the memory or heart,
that this Providence hath made upon those on
whom it wrought this blessed Effect at years of
discretion, and in a more sensible way!

But lest any poor soul should be discouraged
under the display of this Providence, because he
cannot remember the Time, Place, Instruments
and Manner wherein, and by which Conversion-
work was wrought; I will therefore premise this
necessary distinction, to prevent injury to some,
whilst I design benefit to others.

Conversion, as to the subjects of it, may be
considered two wayes; either as it is more sen-
sibly wrought in persons of riper years, who in

their youthful daies were more prophane and vile; or upon persons in their tender years, into whose hearts Grace was more insensibly, and undiscernably instilled by Gods blessing upon pious Education. In the former sort, the distinct acts of the Spirit, as *illuminating*, *convincing*, *humbling*, *drawing* them to *Christ*, and *sealing* them are more evident and discernable: in the latter, more obscure and confused; they can remember, that God gave them an Esteem and liking of godly persons, Care of duty, and Conscience of sin; but as to the Time, Place, Instruments and Manner of the work, they can give but a slender account of them: however, if the work be savingly wrought in them, there is no reason they should be troubled, because the Circumstances of it are not so evident to them, as they are to others. Let the substance and reality of the work appear, and there is no reason to afflict your selves, because of the inevidence of such Circumstances.

But yet where the Circumstances as well as Substance are clear to a man: when we can call to remembrance, the Time when, the Place where, the Instrument by whom that work was wrought, it must needs be exceeding sweet: and they cannot but yield a fresh delight to the soul every time they are reflected upon.

There are many of the following occasions, which it may be, we took for *straglers* when they first befell us: but they proved *scouts* sent out from the main body of Providence, which they make way for.

Now there be divers things in those Providences, that are versant about this work, which

are exceeding ſweet, and taking; as namely,

(1.) The wonderful ſtrangeneſs and unaccountableneſs of this work of Providence, in caſting us into the way, and ordering the occaſions, yea, the minuteſt Circumſtances about this work. Thus you find in *Acts* 8. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, *&c.* the *Eunuch* at that very inſtant when he was reading the Prophet *Eſay*, hath an Interpreter, one among a thouſand, that joins his *Chariot*, juſt as his mind was by a fit occaſion prepared to receive the firſt light of the knowledge of *Chriſt*.

And how ſtrange was that Change (how far ſoever it went) upon *Naaman* the *Syrian*? recorded 2 *Kings* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. That the *Syrians* in their incurſion ſhould bring away this girl, (likely her beauty was the inducement,) and ſhe muſt be preſented to *Naaman*'s Wife, and relate to her the power of God that accompanied the *Prophet*; though you find in that particular caſe there had never been an inſtance given before, *Luke* 4. 27. Doubtleſs, the whole of this affair was guided by the ſignal direction of Providence.

So for the Converſion of the *Samaritans*, it's obſerved *John* 4. 4. Chriſt muſt needs go that way, (*i. e.*) it lay juſt in the road betwixt *Judea* and *Galilee*, and at the ſixth hour (*i. e.*) high noon, he reſts himſelf upon *Jacob*'s Well, ſtill ſeeming to have no other deſign, but his own refreſhment, by ſitting and drinking there: but O what a train of bleſſed Providences follow this, which ſeemed but an accidental thing! firſt the Woman of *Samaria*, and then many more in that City are brought to believe in *Chriſt*, as you find *Verſe* 29. and 41.

It

It is noted by *Melchior Adams* in the Life of *Junius*, how very an *Atheist* he was grown in his younger years; but in order to his Conversion to God, first, a wonderful preservation of his life in a publick tumult at *Lyons* in *France* must make way, which forces from him the acknowlegement of a Deity. Then his Father sends for him home, and with much gentleness perswades him to read the Scriptures; he lights upon the *first* of *John*, and with it he sensibly feels a Divine Supernatural Majesty and Power seizing his soul, which brought him over by a compleat Conversion to *Jesus Christ*. Thus, as the Woman of *Tekoa* told *David*, *doth God devise means to bring back his banished.* *Melch. Adams Vit. Theol. par. 2. p. 194.*

Lavater tells us, that many *Spanish* Souldiers, going into the Wars of *Germany*, were there converted to *Christ*, by falling into the *Cities* and *Towns*, where godly *Ministers* and Christians were.

Mr. *Robert Bolton*, though an excellent Scholar, yet in his younger years he was a very irreligious person, and a jeerer of holy men; but being cast into the company of godly Mr. *Peacock*, was by him brought to repentance, and proved a famous Instrument in the Church of Christ.

A scrap of paper accidentally coming to view, hath been used as an occasion of Conversion. This was the case of a Minister of *Wales*, who had two Livings, but took little care of either. He being at a *Fair*, bought something at a *Pedlers* Standing, and rent off a leaf of Mr. *Perkin's* Catechism to wrapt it in, and reading a line or two in it, God set it home, so as it did the work. See *Firmin's Real Christian* p. 139.

The Marriage of a Godly Man into a Carnal Family, hath been ordered by Providence, for the Conversion and Salvation of many therein. Thus we read, in the Life of that renowned *English* Worthy Mr. *John Bruen*, that in his second Match it was agreed, that he should have one years diet in his Mother-in-laws house: During his abode there that year (saith Mr. *Clark*) the Lord was pleased by his means, graciously to work upon her Soul, as also upon his Wifes Sister, and half Sister, their Brothers Mr. *William* and *Thomas Fox*, with one or two of the servants in that Family.

The reading of a good Book, hath been the means of bringing others to Christ. And thus we find many of the *German* Divines converted, by reading *Luther*'s Books: yea, and what is more strange, Mr. *Sleyden* in his Commentary tells us, that *Vergerius*, though he were present an eye and ear-witness to that doleful case of *Spira*, which one would think should move a stone, yet still continued so firm to the *Popes* Interest, that when he fell into some suspicion among the *Cardinals*, he resolved to purge himself, by writing a Book against the *German Apostates*: but whilst he read the *Protestant* Books, out of no other design, but to confute them; whilst he is weighing the Arguments, is himself convinced and brought to *Christ*. He finding himself thus overcome by the truth, imparts his conviction to his *Brother*, a zealous *Papist* also: this *Brother* deplores the misery of his case, and seeks to reclaim him; but *Vergerius* entreating him to weigh well the *Protestant* Arguments, he also yields; and so both immediately betook themselves to preach Justi-

leyden's mment. 475.

fication

fication by the free grace of God through the blood of Christ.

Yea, not only the reading of a Book, or hearing a Minister, but (which is most remarkable) the very mistake or forgetfulness of a Minister, hath been improv'd by *Providence* for this end and purpose. *Augustine* once preaching to his Congregation, forgot the Argument which first he propos'd, and fell upon the Error of the *Manichees* beside his first intention: by which discourse, he converted one *Firmus* his *Auditor*; who fell down at his feet weeping, and confessing he had lived a *Manichee* many years. Another I knew, who going to preach, took up another *Bible* than that he design'd, in which, not only missing his *Notes*, but the *Chapter* also in which his *Text* lay, was put to some loss thereby: but after a short pause, he resolv'd to speak to any other Scripture that might be presented to him, and accordingly read that Text, 2 Pet. 3. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his Promise*, &c. And though he had nothing prepar'd; yet the Lord help him to speak both methodically and pertinently from it: by which discourse, a gracious change was wrought upon one in the Congregation, who hath since given good Evidence of a sound Conversion, and acknowledged this Sermon to be the first and only Means thereof. *Possidonius in vita Augustini cap. 15.*

The accompanying of others in a Neighbourly civil Visit, hath been over-rul'd to the same end. Thus many of the *Jews* accompanied *Mary* unto *Bethany*, (designing only to manifest their civil respect) but there they met Christ, saw the things which he did, and believed on him, *John* 11. 45.

Mr. *Firmin* in his *Real Christian*, *pag.* 97, 98. tells us of one, who had liv'd many years in a *Town* where *Christ* had been as clearly, and as long preached, as in any *Town* in *England*. This man when he was about seventy six years of age, went to visit a sick Neighbour. "A Christian "friend of mine (saith mine Author) came to "see him also, and finding this old man there; "whom he judged to be one that lived upon his "own stock: Civility, good Works, *&c.* he "purposely fell into that discourse, to shew how "many persons lived upon their duties, but ne-"ver came to *Christ*. The old man sitting by "the bed side, heard him; and God was pleased "to convince him, that he was such a person, "who had lived upon himself without Christ to "that day; and would say afterwards, had I "dyed before threescore and sixteen, I had pe-"rished, for I knew not Christ.

The committing of a godly man to *Prison*, hath been the method of Providence, to save the soul of a poor Keeper. So *Paul*, *Acts* 16. 27. was made a *Prisoner*, to make his Keeper a spiritual *Prisoner*. The like success had Dr. *Barnes* in Queen *Mary*'s dayes, who afterwards celebrated the *Lords Supper* in Prison with his converted Keeper.

The scattering of *Ministers* and *Christians* by Persecution from *Cities* and *Towns*, into the ignorant and barbarous parts of the Countrey, hath been the way of Providence, to find out, and bring home some lost sheep that were found there, to Jesus Christ, *Acts* 8. 1. 4. The like signal Event hath since followed upon the like scattering of godly *Ministers*, whereof are many

A *Servant* running away from his Master, (likely upon no other design but to live an idle life) yet falling into such places and companies, as Providence ordered (in a design to him unknown) hath thereby been brought to be the servant of *Christ*. This was the very case of *Onesimus*, who run away from his Master *Philemon*, to *Rome*; where by a strange Providence (possibly a meer curiosity to see the Prisoners) he there falls into *Paul*'s hands, who begat him to Christ in his bonds, *Philemon, Ver.* 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Going to hear a Sermon in jest, hath proved some mens Conversion in earnest. The above named Mr. *Firmin* in the fore-cited Book, tells us of a notorious *drunkard*, whom the drunkards called *Father*, that one day would needs go to hear what *Wilson* said, out of no other design it seems, but to scoff at that holy man: but in the prayer before Sermon, his heart began to thaw; and when he read his Text, which was John 5. 14. *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*: he could not contain; and in that Sermon the Lord changed his heart, though so bitter an Enemy, that the Minister on Lecture-dayes was afraid to go to Church before his shop-door. *Lo, these are parts of his wayes, but how small a portion is known of him?*

The dropping of some grave and weighty word accidentally in the presence of vain carnal persons, the death of an Husband, Wife or Child, a fit of sickness, with a thousand other such like occasions, have been thus improved by Providence to the Conversion of souls.

And no less remarkable and wonderful are the designs of Providence in ordering the *removals*,

and governing the *motions* of Ministers, from place to place in order unto the Conversion of Souls. Thus oftentimes it carries them to places where they intended not to go; God having (unknown to them) some Elect Vessels there, who must be Called by the Gospel.

Thus *Paul* and *Timothy* (a sweet and lovely pair) when they were travelling through *Phrygia* and *Galatia*, were forbid to preach the Word in *Asia*, to which probably their minds inclined, *Acts* 16. 6. and when they essayed to go into *Bythinia*, the Spirit suffered them not, *Ver.* 7. But a man of *Macedonia* (*i. e.* an *Angel* in the shape or habit of a man of that *Country*) appeared to *Paul* in a Vision, and prayed him, saying, *Come over into* Macedonia, *and help us*, Ver. 9. and there did God open the heart of *Lydia*.

I knew a pious *Minister* now with God, who falling in his Study upon a very rouzing subject, intended for his own Congregation, was strongly moved, when he had finished it, to go to a rude, vile, prophane people, about five miles off, and first preach it to them; after many wrestlings with himself, not being willing to quench any motion that might be supposed to come from the Spirit of God, he obeyed, and went to this people, who had then no Minister of their own, and few durst come among them. And there did the Lord, beyond all expectation, open a door, and several prophane ones received *Christ* in that place, and engaged this *Minister* to a Weekly Lecture among them, in which many souls were won to God.

The same holy Man, at another time, being [illegible] a Journey, passed by a company of vain

persons, who were wrestling upon a *Green* near the road: and just as he came against the place, one of them had thrown his *Antagonist*, and stood triumphing in his strength and activity. This good man rode up to them, and turning his speech to this person, told him, Friend, I see you are a strong man; but yet let not the strong man glory in his strength: You must know, that you are not to wrestle with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses: how sad will it be, that *Satan* should at last trip up the heels of your hope, and give you an eternal overthrow? And after about a quarter of an hours serious discourse upon this subject, he left them, and went on his Journey; but this discourse made such an impression, that the person had no rest, till he opened his trouble to a godly Minister, who wisely following the work upon his soul, saw at last the blessed issue thereof in the gracious change of the person, whereof he afterwards gave the *Minister* a joyful account. O how unsearchable are the Methods of Providence in this matter?

Nay, what is yet more wonderful, the Providence of God hath sometimes ordered the very malice of *Satan*, and wickedness of men, as an occasion of Eternal good to their souls. A very memorable Example whereof I shall here give the Reader, faithfully recording what not many years past fell out in my own observation in this place, to the astonishment of many spectators.

In the year 167[illegible], there came into this *Port* a Ship of *Poole*, in her return from *Virginia*; in which Ship was one of that place, a lusty young man of twenty three years of age, who was

rurgeon in the Ship. This person in the voyage fell into a deep melancholy, which the *Devil* greatly improved to serve his own design for the ruine of this poor man; however, it pleased the Lord to restrain him from any attempts upon his own life, until he arrived here. But shortly after his arrival, upon the Lords Day early in the morning (being in bed with his Brother) he took a knife prepared for that purpose, and cut his own throat, and withal leapt out of the bed, and though the wound was deep and large, yet thinking it might not soon enough dispatch his wretched life, desperately thrust it into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his *Brother* awaking, made a cry for help: hereupon a *Physician* and a *Chirurgeon* coming in, found the wound in his Throat mortal; and all they could do at present, was only to stitch it and apply a plaister, with design, rather to enable him to speak for a little while, than with any expectation of cure; for before that, he breathed through the wound, and his voice was inarticulate.

In this condition I found him that morning, and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of Eternity, I laboured to work upon his heart the sense of his condition, telling him, I had but little time to do any thing for him, and therefore desired him to let me know, what his own apprehensions of his present Condition were: He told me, he hoped in God for Eternal Life; I replyed, that I feared his hopes were ungrounded, for that the Scripture tells us, *No Murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*, but this was self-murther, the [illegible] of all Murthers: and inas-

ing upon the aggravation and heinousnes of the fact, I perceived his vain confidence began to fall, and some meltings of heart appeared in him. He then began to lament with many tears his sin and misery, and asked me, if there might yet be hope for one that had destroyed himself, and shed his own blood. I replyed, the sin indeed is great, but not unpardonable; and if the Lord gave him repentance unto life, and faith to apply *Jesus Christ*, it should be certainly pardoned to him: and finding him unacquainted with these things, I opened to him the nature and necessity of faith and repentance, which he greedily suckt in, and with great vehemency cryed to God, that he would work them upon his soul, and intreated me also to pray with him and for him, that it might be so. I prayed with him, and the Lord thawed his heart exceedingly in that duty: loth he was to part with me; but the duties of the day necessitating me to leave him, I briefly summed up what was most necessary in my parting counsel to him, and took my leave, never expecting to see him more in this world. But beyond my own and all mens expectation, he continued all that day, and panted most ardently after *Jesus Christ*: no discourses pleased him, but *Christ* and faith; and in this frame I found him in the evening. He rejoiced greatly to see me again, and entreated me to continue my discourses upon these subjects; and after all told me, Sir, the Lord hath given me repentance for this sin, yea, and for every other sin. I see the Evil of sin now, so as I never saw it before. O I loath my self: I am a vile creature in my own eyes. I do also believe; *Lord* [illegible]

heartily willing to take Christ upon his own terms. One thing only troubles me, I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ (said he) apply his blood to me, that have shed my own blood? I told him, Christ shed his blood even for them that with wicked hands had shed the blood of Christ; and that was a sin of deeper guilt than his. Well, (said he) I will cast my self upon Christ; let him do by me what he will. And so I parted with him that night.

Next morning the wounds were to be opened; and then, the opinion of the *Chirurgeons* was, he would immediately expire.

Accordingly, at his desire, I came that morning and found him in a most serious frame. I prayed with him, and then the wound in his stomach was opened, but by this time the *Ventricle* it self was swoln out of the *orifice* of the wound, and lay like a livid discoloured *Tripe* upon his body, and was also cut through; so that all concluded, it was impossible for him to live; however they stitcht the wound in the stomach, enlarged the Orifice, and fomented it, and wrought it again into his body, and so stitching up the skin, left him to the dispose of Providence.

But so it was, that both the deep wound in his throat, and this in his stomach healed; and the more dangerous wound *sin* had made upon his *soul*, was, I trust, effectually healed also. I spent many hours with him in that sickness, and after his return home, received this account from Mr. *Samuel Hardy*, a Minister in that Town. Part whereof I shall transcribe.

Dear

Dear Sir,

I Was much troubled at the sad Providence in your Town; but did much rejoice, that he fell into such hands for his body and soul. You have taken much pains with him, and I hope to good purpose. I think, if ever a great and through work were done such a way, *it is now; and if never the like, I am perswaded now it is. Never grow weary of such good works. One such Instance is (methinks) enough to make you to abound in the work of the Lord all your dayes,* &c.

O how unsearchable are the wayes of Providence, in leading men to Christ! Let none be encouraged by this to sin, that grace may abound. These are rare and singular Instances of the mercy of God, and such as no presumptuous sinner can expect to find. It's only recited here, to the honour of Providence, which works for the recovery of sinners in wayes that we understand not. O what a fetch hath Providence beyond our Understandings!

And as it orders very strange occasions to awaken and rouse souls at first, so it works no less wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection; and this it doth two wayes. (2.)

(1.) By quickning and reviving dying convictions and troubles for sin. Souls after their first awakening, are apt to lose the sense and impression of their first troubles for sin; but Providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent it sometimes, by *directing the Minister* to some discourse or passage, that shall fall as pat, as if the case of such a person had been studied by

him, and designedly spoken to. How often have I found this in the cases of many souls, who have professed they have stood amazed, to hear the very thoughts of their hearts discovered by the Preacher, who knew nothing of them! Sometimes by directing them to some proper rousing Scripture, that suites their present case. And sometimes by suffering them to fall into some new sin, which shall awaken all their former troubles again, and put a new efficacy and activity into the Conscience. The world is full of Instances in all these cases, and because most Christians have experience of these things in themselves, it will be needless to recite them here. Search but a few years back, and you may remember, that according to this Account (at least, in some particulars) Providence ordered the matter with you. Have you not found some rod or other prepared by Providence, to rouze you out of your security? Why, this is so common a thing with Christians, that they many times presage an affliction coming from the frames they find their own hearts in.

(2.) It gives also great assistance to the work of the Spirit upon the soul, by ordering, supporting, relieving and cheering means, to prop up and comfort the soul, when it is over-burthened, and ready to sink in the deeps of troubles. I remember Mr. *Bolton* gives us one Instance, which fits both these cases, the *reviving of convictions*, and *seasonable supports in the deeps of troubles*. And it is of a person that by convictions had been fetcht off from his wicked companions, and entered into a reformed course of life; but after this, through the inticement of his old companions,

the

the subtilty of Satan, and corruption of his own heart, did again relapse into the wayes of sin. Then was Providentially brought to his view that Scripture, *Prov.* 1. 24, 25, 26, *&c.* this renewed his trouble; yea, aggravated it to a greater height than ever; insomuch that he could scarcely think (as it seems by the relation) his sin could be pardoned. But in this plunge, that Text *Luke* 17. 4. was presented to him, which sweetly setled him in a sure and glorious peace.

Nor can we here forget that miraculous work of Providence, in a time of great extremity, which was wrought for that good *Gentlewoman* Mrs. *Honeywood*, (and is somewhere mentioned by the same Author) who under a deep and sad desertion, refused and put off all comfort, seeming to despair utterly of the grace and mercy of God. A worthy Minister being one day with her, and reasoning against her desperate conclusions, she took a *Venice-glass* from the Table, and said, Sir, I am as sure to be damned, as this glass is to be broken; and therewith threw it forcibly to the ground; but to the astonishment of both, the glass remained whole and sound, which the Minister taking up with admiration, rebuked her presumption, and shewed her what a wonder Providence had wrought for her satisfaction, and it greatly altered the temper of her mind. O how unsearchable are his wayes! and his paths past finding out! Lo, these are part of his wayes; but how small a portion do we know of him?

And

AND now suffer me to expostulate a little with thy soul Reader, hast thou been duly sensible of thy obligation to Providence, for this inestimable favour? O what hath it done for thee! there are divers kinds of mercies conveyed to men by the hand of Providence, but none like this: in all the Treasury of its benefits, none is found like this. Did it cast thee into the way of Conversion, and order the means and occasions of it for thee, when thou little thoughtest of any such thing? How dear and sweet, should the remembrance of it be to thy soul! Methinks it should astonish and melt you every time you reflect upon it. Such Mercies should never grow stale, or look like common things to you: for do but seriously consider the following particulars.

(1.) How *surprizing* the mercy was, which it pleased for you in that day. Providence had a design upon you, for your eternal good, which you understood not. The time of mercy was now fully come; the Decree was now ready to bring forth that mercy, with which it had gone big from Eternity, and its gracious design must be executed by the hand of Providence, so far as concerned the external means and instruments: and how aptly did it cause all things to fall in with that design, though you knew not the meaning of it? Look over all the before mentioned Examples, and you shall see the blessed work of Conversion begun upon those souls, when they

minded it no more, than *Saul* did a Kingdom, that morning he went out to seek his *Fathers Asses*, 1 *Sam.* 9. 3, 20. Providence might truly have said to you in that day, as Christ said to *Peter*, John 13. 7. *What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know it. Gods thoughts are not as our thoughts; but as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his thoughts higher than ours, and his wayes than our wayes.* Little did *Zacheus* think, when he climbed up into the *Sycamore*-tree, to see *Christ* as he passed that way, what a design of mercy *Christ* had upon him, who took thence the occasion of becoming both his *Guest* and *Saviour*, Luke 19. 5, 6, 7, 8. And as little did some of you think, what the aim of Providence was, when you went (some out of custom, others out of curiosity, if not worse ends) to hear such a Sermon. O how stupendious are the wayes of God!

What a distinguishing and seasonable mercy (2.)
was usher'd in by Providence in that day. It brought you to the means of salvation in a good hour. At that very nick of time, when the *Angel* troubled the Waters, you were brought to the *Pool*; to allude to that, *John* 5. 4. Now the accepted day was come, the *Spirit* was in the Ordinance, or Providence that converted you, and you were set in the way of it. It may be, you had heard many hundred Sermons before, but nothing would stick till now, because the hour was not come. The Lord did, as it were, call in the Word for such a man, such a woman; and Providence said, Lord, here he is, I have brought him before thee. There were many others under that Sermon, that received no such mercy

You your selves had heard many before, but not to that advantage, as it is said, Luke 4. 27. *There were many Lepers in Israel in the dayes of Elizeus, but to none of them was the Prophet sent, save unto Naaman the Syrian.* So there were many poor unconverted souls beside you under the Word that day, and it may be, to none of them was salvation sent that day, but to you. O blessed Providence, that set you in the way of mercy at that time!

What a weighty and important mercy was Providentially directed to your souls that day. There are mercies of all sizes and kinds in the hands of Providence to dispense to the sons of men; its left hand is full of blessings, as well as its right. It hath health and riches, honours and pleasures, as well as Christ and Salvation to dispense. The world is full of its *left hand* favours; but the blessings of its *right hand* are invaluably precious, and few there be that receive them. It doth thousands of kind offices for men; but among them all, this is the chiefest, to lead and direct them to Christ. For consider,

(1.) Of all mercies, this comes through most and greatest difficulties, *Eph.* 1. 19, 20.

(2.) This is a spiritual mercy, excelling in dignity of nature all others, more than *gold* excels the *dirt* under your feet, *Rev.* 3. 18. One such gift, is worth thousands of other mercies.

(3.) This is a mercy immediately flowing out of the fountain of Gods *electing love*, a mercy never dropt into any, but an Elect Vessel, 1 *Thess.* 1. 4, 5.

(4.) This is a mercy, that infallibly secures [illegible] as we may argue from Conversion to

Election, looking back, so from Conversion to Salvation, looking forward, *Heb.* 6. 9.

(5.) Lastly, This is an Eternal mercy, that which will stick by you, when Father, Mother, Wife, Children, Estate, Honours, Health and Life shall fail thee, *John* 4. 14.

O therefore set a special Mark upon that Providence, that set you in the way of this mercy. It hath performed that for thee, which all the Ministers on Earth, and Angels in Heaven could never have performed. This is a Mercy, that puts weight and value into the smallest Circumstance that relates to it.

The Fifth Performance of Providence.

V.

THus you hear, how instrumental Providence hath been, in ordering the Means and Occasions of the greatest Mercies for your souls. Let us now take into consideration, another excellent Performance of Providence respecting the good of your bodies and souls too, *in respect of that Imployment and Calling it hath ordered for you in this world*; for it hath not only an Eye upon your well being in the *world to come*, but upon your well being in *this world* also; and that very much depends upon the Station and Vocation to which it calls you. Providential performance with respect to our Civil Calling.

Now the Providence of God with respect to our civil Callings, may be displayed very clearly in the following particulars.

1.) In directing you to a Calling in your Youth, and not suffering you to live an idle, useless and sinful life, as many do, who are but burthens to the Earth; *fruges consumere nati*, the Wens of the body politick, serving only to disfigure and drein it, to eat what others earn. Sin brought in sweat, Gen. 3. 19. but now, not to sweat increaseth sin, 2 *Thess.* 3. 12. He that lives *idly*, cannot live *honestly*; as is plainly enough intimated, 1 *Thess.* 4. 11, 12. But when God puts men into a lawful Calling, wherein the labours of their hands or heads is sufficient for them, it is a very valuable mercy; for thereby they *eat their own bread*, 2 Thess. 3. 12. Many a sad Temptation is happily prevented; and they are ordinarily furnished by it, for works of mercy to others, and surely it is more blessed to give, than to receive.

(2.) In ordering you to such *Callings* and *Imployments* in the world, as are, not only *lawful* in themselves, but most *suitable* to you. There be many persons imployed in *sinful* Trades and Arts, meerly to furnish other mens lusts: they do not only sin in their Imployments; but their very Imployments are sinful: they trade for Hell, and are Factors for the Devil. *Demetrius* and the Crafts-men at *Ephesus*, got their Estates by making *Shrines* for *Diana*, Acts 19. 24, 25. (*i. e.*) little cases, or boxes with folding leaves, within which the *Image* of that *Idol* late enshrined. These were carried about by the People in Procession, in honour of their Idol. And at this day, how many wicked Arts and Imployments are there invented, (and multitudes of persons maintained by them) meerly to gratifie the pride

and wantonness of a debauched age?

Now to have an honest lawful imployment, wherein you do not dishonour God in benefiting your selves, is no small mercy.

But if it be not only lawful in it self, but suited to your *genius* and strength, there is a double mercy in it. Some poor Creatures are engaged in Callings, that eat up their time and strength, and make their lives very uncomfortable to them: they have not only *spending* and wasting Imployments in the world; but such as allow them little or no time for their *general Calling*: and yet all this doth but keep them and theirs alive. Oh therefore, if God have fitted you with an honest Imployment, wherein you have less toil than others, and more time for Heavenly Exercises, ascribe this benefit to the special care of Providence for you.

In setling you in such an Imployment and Calling in the world, as possibly neither your selves nor *Parents* could ever expect you should arrive to. There are among us such persons, as on this account are signally obliged to Divine Providence. God hath put them into such a way, as neither they nor their Parents ever projected. For, look as the *Flower-de-luce* in the Compass, turns now this way, then that way, and never ceases moving, till it settle to the *North point*; just so it is in our setlement in the world. A Child is now designed for this, then for that, but at last setles in that way of Imployment which Providence designed him to. How strangely are things wheeled about by Providence! not what we, or our Parents, but what God designed shall take place. *Amos* was very meanly employed [illegible]

first, but God designed him for a more honourable and comfortable Calling, *Amos* 7. 14, 15. *David* followed the Ewes, and likely never raised his thoughts to higher things in the dayes of his youth; but God made him the Royal Shepherd of a better flock, *Psalm* 78. 70, 71. *Peter* and *Andrew* were imployed as Fisher-men, but *Christ* calls them from that to an higher Calling, *Matth.* 4. 18, 19. to be fishers of men. *Parens* when he was fourteen years old, was by the instigation of his *Step-mother*, placed with an *Apothecary*; but Providence so wrought, that he was taken off from that, and fitted for the Ministry; wherein he became a fruitful and eminent Instrument to the Church. *James Andreas* was by reason of his Fathers inability to keep him at School, designed for a *Carpenter*; but was afterwards by the perswasion of friends, and assistance of the Church-stock sent to *Stutgard*, and thence to the University, and so arrived to a very eminent station of service to the Church. A master builder *Oecolampadius* was by his *Father* designed for a *Merchant*; but his *Mother* by earnest entreaties, prevailed to keep him at School: and this Man was a blessed Instrument in the reformation of Religion. I might easily cite multitudes of such Instances; but a taste may suffice.

4.) In securing your Estates from ruine, Job 1. 10. *Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?* This is the Enclosure of Providence, which secures to us, what by its favour we acquire in the way of honest industry.

5.) In making your Calling sufficient for you. It was the prayer of *Moses* for the Tribe of *Judah*, Exod. 33. 7. *Let his hands be sufficient for him*

and it is no small mercy, if yours be so to you. Some there be that have work, but not strength to go through with it; others have strength, but no imployment for it. Some have hands, and work for them; but it's not sufficient for them and theirs. If God bless your labours, so as to give you and yours necessary supports, and comfort in the world by it, it's a choice Providence, and with all thankfulness to be acknowledged.

Object. 1. IF any that fear God shall complain, *That although they have a Calling, yet it is an hard and laborious one, which takes up too much of their time, which they would gladly imploy in other, and better work.* I answer, *Object.*

(1.) It's like, the Wisdom of Providence foresaw this to be the most suitable and proper Imployment for you; and if you had more ease and rest, you might have more temptations than now you have: the strength and time which is now taken up in your daily labours, wherein you serve God, might otherwayes have been spent upon such lusts wherein you might have served the Devil. *Sol.*

(2.) Hereby it may be, your health is the better preserved, and natural refreshments made the sweeter to you, Eccles. 5. 12. *The sleep of a labouring man is sweet to him, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich, will not suffer him to sleep.*

(3.) And as to the service of God, if your hearts be spiritual, you may enjoy much Communion with God in your very Imployments, and you have some intervals and respits for that you

pose. Have you not more spare hours, than you imploy to that end?

Obj. 2. *But all my labours will scarcely suffice, to procure me and mine the Necessaries of life. I am kept short and low to what others are; and this is a sad affliction.*

Though the Wisdom of Providence hath ordered you a lower, and poorer condition than others, yet (1.) Consider how many there be that are lower than you in the world: you have but little of the world; yet others have less. Read the description of those persons, *Job* 30. 4, &c. (2.) If God have given you but a small portion of the world; yet if you be godly, he hath promised never to forsake you, *Heb.* 13. 5. (3.) Providence hath ordered that condition for you, which is really best for your eternal good. If you had more of the world than you have, your heads and hearts might not be able to manage it to your advantage. A small *Boat* must have but a narrow *Sail*. You have not wanted hitherto the necessaries of life, and are commanded, *having food and rayment* (though none of the finest) *to be therewith content. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked*, Psal. 37. 16. better in the *Acquisition*, sweeter in the *Fruition*, and more comfortable in the *Acquest*.

Well then, if Providence hath so disposed of you all, that you can eat your own bread, and so advantagiously directed some of you to im-

your selves and families, but an overplus for works of mercy to others, and all this brought about for you in a way you did not project; let God be owned, and honoured in this Providence. Will you not henceforth call him, *My Father, the Guide of my youth?* as it is *Jer.* 3. 4. Surely, it was the Lord that guided you to settle as you did in those dayes of your youth: You reap at this day, and may to your last day, the fruits of those early Providences in your youth.

NOw see that you walk answerably to the obligations of Providence in this particular; and see to it in the fear of God, that you abuse not any of those things to *his dishonour*, which he hath wrought for *your comfort*. To prevent which, I will here drop a few needful Cautions, and shut up this particular.

Be not slothful and idle in your *Vocations*. It's 1. Ca
said, *Augustus* built an *Apragapolis*, a City void of business; but I am sure God never erected any City, Town or Family to that end. The Command to *Adam*, *Gen.* 3. 19. no doubt reaches all his posterity: and Gospel-Commands back and second it upon Christians, *Rom.* 12. 11. and 1 *Thess.* 4. 11. If you be negligent, you cannot be innocent. And yet,

Be not so intent upon your *particular* Callings, 2. Ca
as to make them interfere with your *general* Calling. Beware you lose not your God in the Crowd and hurry of Earthly business. Mind that solemn warning, 1 Tim. 6. 9. *But they that will be rich fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and*

into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. The Inhabitants of *OEnoe*, a dry Island near *Athens*, bestowed much labour to draw in a River to water it, and make it fruitful; but when the Sluces were opened, the waters flowed so abundantly, that it overflowed the Island, and drowned the Inhabitants. The application is obvious. It was an excellent saying of *Seneca, rebus non me trado, sed commodo.* I don't give, but lend my self to business.

Caution Remember alwayes, the success of your Callings and earthly Imployments is by Divine blessing, not humane diligence alone, Deut. 8. 18. *Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.* The Devil himself was so far Orthodox, as to acknowledge it, Job 1. 10. *Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands*, &c. Recommend therefore your affairs to God by prayer, according to Psal. 37. 4, 5. *Delight thy self also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* And touch not with that which you cannot recommend to God by Prayer for a blessing.

Caution Be well satisfied in that Station and Imployment in which Providence hath placed you, and do not so much as wish your selves in another, 1 Cor. 7. 20. *Let every man abide in the same Calling, wherein he was called.* Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident hath suited all things better to your Eternal good, than you could do, had you been left to your own option.

The Sixth Performance of Providence.

VI.

THus you see, the care Providence hath had over you in your youth, in respect of that Civil Imployment to which it guided us in those dayes.

Providential performances with respect to our Civil Relations.

We will in the next place consider it *as our Guide, and the Orderer of our Relations for us.* That Providence hath a special hand in this matter, is evident both from Scripture assertions, and the acknowledgements of holy men, who in that great concernment of their lives, have still owned, and acknowledged the directing hand of Providence. Take an instance of both. The Scripture plainly asserts the dominion of Providence over this affair in Prov. 19. 14. *A prudent Wife is from the Lord:* and Prov. 18. 22. *Whoso findeth a Wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.* So for Children, see Psal. 127. 3. *Lo, Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the Womb is his reward.*

And it hath ever been the practice of holy men, to seek the Lord for direction and counsel, when they have been upon the change of their condition. No doubt but *Abraham*'s encouragement in that case was the fruit of prayer, *Gen.* 24. 7. His pious servant also, who was imployed in that affair, did both earnestly seek counsel of God, *Gen.* 24. 12. and thankfully acknowledge his gracious Providence in guiding it, *Ver.* 26, 27.

T

The same we may observe in Children, the fruit of marriage, 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. *Luke* 1. 13, 14. Now the Providence of God may be divers wayes displayed for the engaging of our hearts in love to the God of our mercies.

(1.) There is very much of Providence seen in appointing the Parties each for other. In this, the Lord goes oftentimes beyond our thoughts and projections; yea, and oftentimes crosses mens desires and designs to their great advantage. Not what they fancy; but what his infinite wisdom judges best, and most beneficial for them takes place. Hence it is, that probabilities are so often dashed; and things remote and utterly improbable are brought about, in very strange and unaccountable methods of Providence.

(2.) There is much of Providence seen in the harmony and agreeableness of tempers and dispositions, from whence a very great part of the tranquillity and comforts of our lives results: or at least, though natural tempers and educations did not so much harmonize before, yet they do so after they come under the Ordinance of God, Gen. 2. 24. *They two shall be one flesh*, not one only in respect of Gods *institution*, but one in respect of love and *affection*, that those who so lately were meer strangers to each other, are now endeared to a degree beyond the neareſt relations in blood. *Ubi supra, For this cause shall a man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

(3.) But especially, Providence is remarkable, in making one instrumental to the eternal good of the other, 1 Cor. 7. 16. *How knowest thou, O Wife, but thou maist save thy Husband?* or

how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife? Hence is that grave Exhortation to the Wives of unbelieving Husbands, 1 *Pet.* 3. 1. to win them by their conversation, which should be to them in stead of an ordinance.

Or if both be gracious, then what singular assistance and mutual help is hereby gained to the furtherance of their Eternal good? Whilst they live together *as Heirs of the grace of life*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. O blessed Providence! that directed such into so intimate relation on Earth, who shall inherit together the *common Salvation* in Heaven!

(4.) How much of Providence is seen in *Children* the fruit of *Marriage*? To have any Posterity in the Earth, and not be left altogether as a dry tree: To have comfort and joy in them, is a special Providence, importing a special mercy to us. To have the breaches made upon our Families repaired, is a Providence to be owned with a thankful heart. When God shall say to a man, as he speaks in another case to the *Church*, Isa. 49. 20. *The Children which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, the place is too strait for me*, &c.

And these Providences will appear more affectingly sweet and lovely to you, if you but compare its allotments to you, with what it hath allotted to many others in the world. For do but look abroad, and you shall find,

(1.) Multitudes unequally yoked, to the imbittering of their lives, whose Relations are clogs and hinderances both in Temporals and Spirituals. Yea, we find an account in Scripture of gracious persons, a great part of whose comfort in this world hath been split upon this

Rock.

Rock. *Abigail* was a *discreet* and [illegible] Woman, but very unsuitably matched to a *churlish Nabal*; See 1 *Sam.* 25. 25. What a temptation to the neglect of a known duty, prevail'd upon the renowned *Moses*, by the means of *Zipporah* his Wife? *Exod.* 4. 24, 25. *David* had his scolling *Michal*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 20. And patient *Job* no small addition to all his other afflictions, from the *Wife* of his bosom, who should have been a support to him in the day of his trouble, *Job* 19. 17.

No doubt, but God sanctifies such rods to his Peoples good. If *Socrates* knew how to improve his affliction in his *Xantippe*, to the increase of his patience; much more will they who converse with God under all Providences, whether sweet or bitter. Nevertheless this must be acknowledged to be a sad stroke upon any person, and such as maims them upon the working hand, by unfitting them for duty, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7. and cuts off much of the comfort of life also.

(2.) How many are there, who never enjoy the comfortable fruits of Marriage? but are denyed the light, at least, the enjoyment of Children, Jer. 22. 30. *Thus saith the Lord, write this man Childless*, &c. or if they have Children, yet cannot enjoy them, Hosea 9. 12. *Though they bring up Children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left*; who only bear for the grave, and have their expectations raised for a greater affliction to themselves.

(3.) And it is no rare or unusual thing to see Children and near Relations the greatest Instruments of affliction to their Parents and Friends: so that after all their other sorrows

and troubles in the World, nearest Relations bring up the rear of sorrows (as One speaks) and prove greater griefs than any other. O how many *Parents* have complained with the Tree in the Fable, that their very hearts have been rived asunder with those Wedges that were cut out of their own bodies? What a grief was *Esau* to *Isaac* and *Rebecka*? Gen. 26. 34, 35. What a scourge were *Absalom* and *Amnon* to *David*? Mr. T. C. in his *Isagoge*.

Well then, if God have set *the solitary in Families*, as it is *Psal.* 68. 6. built an house for the desolate, given you comfortable relations, which are springs of daily comfort and refreshment to you, you are upon many accounts engaged to walk answerably to these gracious Providences. And that you may understand wherein that *decorum* and agreeable comportment with these Providences consists, take up the sense of your duty in these brief hints.

(1.) Ascribe to God the glory of all those Providential works which yield you comfort. You see a wise, directing, governing Providence, which hath disposed and ordered all things beyond your own projections and designs. *The way of man is not in himself, nor is it in him that walketh to direct his own steps*, Jer. 10. 23. Not what you projected, but what an higher counsel than yours determined, is come to pass. Good *Jacob* when God had made him the Father of a Family, admired God in the mercy, Gen. 32. 10. *With my staff* (said he) *I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.* And how doth this mercy humble and melt him? *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.*

(1.)

(2.) Be exact in discharging the duties of those Relations which so gracious a Providence hath led you into. Abuse not the effects of so much mercy and love to you. The Lord expects praise, where ever you have comfort. This aggravated *David's* sin, that he should dare to abuse so great love and mercy, as God had shewn him in his Family Relations, 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9.

(3.) Improve Relations to the end Providence designed them. Walk together as Co-heirs of the grace of life: study to be mutual blessings to each other: so walk in your Relations, that the parting day may be sweet. Death will shortly break up the Family; and then nothing but the sense of duty discharged, or the neglects pardoned, will give comfort.

The Seventh Performance of Providence.

VII.

YOu have heard how well Providence hath performed its part for you, in planting you into families, who once were solitary. Now let us in the next place view another gracious performance of Providence for us, *in making provision from time to time for us and our Families.* I the rather put these Providences together in this place, because I find the Scripture doth so, Psalm 107. 41. *He setteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.*

You know the Promises God hath made to his People, Psal. 34. 10. *The young Lions shall lack,*

and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing. And have you not alſo ſeen the conſtant performance of it? Cannot you give the ſame anſwer, if the ſame queſtion were propounded to you that the Diſciples did, Luke 22. 35. *Since I ſent you forth, lacked ye any thing? and they ſaid, nothing.* Can ye not with *Jacob*, call him, *the God that fed you all your life long?* Gen. 48. 15. Surely *he hath given bread to them that fear him, and been ever mindful of his Covenant*, Pſal. 111. 5.

To diſplay this Providence, we will conſider it in the following particulars.

(1.) The *aſſiduity* and *conſtancy* of the care of Providence for the Saints, Lam. 3. 23. *His mercies are new every morning.* It is not the ſupply of one or two preſſing needs, but all your wants, as they grow from day to day through all your dayes, Gen. 48. 15. *The God that fed me all my life long.* The care of Providence runs parallel with the line of life. See Iſa. 46. 3, 4. *Hearken unto me, O houſe of Jacob, and all the remnant of the houſe of Iſrael, which are born by me from the belly, which are carryed from the Womb: and even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you.* So that as God bid *Iſrael*, Micah 6. 5. *to remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that they might know the faithfulneſs of the Lord*; ſo would I perſwade thee, Reader, to record the wayes of Providence, from firſt to laſt, throughout thy whole courſe to this day, that thou maiſt ſee what a God he hath been to thee.

(2.) The seasonableness, and opportuneness of its provisions for them: for so runs the promise, Isa. 41. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; and so hath the performance of it been. And this hath been made good to distressed Saints sometimes in a more *ordinary way*, God secretly blessing a little, and making it sufficient for us and ours: *Job* tells us of *the secret of God upon his Tabernacle*, Job 29. 4. (*i. e.*) his secret blessing is in their *Tabernacles*; by reason whereof it is that they subsist; but it is in an unaccountable way that they do so. And sometimes in an *extraordinary* way it breaks forth for their supply. So you find in 2 *Kings* 17. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. the Cruse and Barrel fail not.

Mr. *Samuel Clarke*, in the Life of that painful and humble servant of Christ Mr. *John Fox*, records a memorable Instance of Providence, and it is this, That towards the end of King *Henry* the Eighth his Reign he went to *London*, where he quickly spent that little his friends had given him, or he had acquired by his own diligence, and began to be in great want. As one day he sate in *Paul's Church*, spent with long fasting, his countenance thin, and his eyes hollow, after the ghastful manner of dying men, every one shunning a spectacle of so much horror: There came one to him, whom he had never seen before, and thrust an untold summ of money into his hand, bidding him, be of good cheer, and accept that small gift in good part from his Country-man; and that he should make much of himself, for that within a few dayes new hopes were

were at hand, and a more certain condition of livelihood. Three dayes after the *Dutchess* of *Richmond* sent for him to live in her house, and be *Tutor* to the *Earl* of *Surrey*'s Children, then under her care.

Mr. *Isaac Ambrose* a worthy Divine, whose labours have made him acceptable to his generation, in his Epistle to the *Earl of Bedford* prefixed to his *Last things*, gives a pregnant Instance in his own case; his words are these; *For mine own part*, (saith he) *however the Lord hath seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of outward things, for which I bless his name; yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of his peculiar Providence, that thereby they have been very much sweetned, and my heart hath been raised to admire his grace. When of late under a hard dispensation (which I judge not meet to mention) wherein I suffered conscientiously) all streams of wonted supplyes being stopt, the waters of relief for my self and family did run low. I went to bed with some staggerings and doubtings of the Fountains letting out it self for our refreshing; but e're I did awake in the morning, a Letter was brought to my bed side, which was signed by a choice friend Mr.* Anthony Ash, *which reported some unexpected breakings out of Gods goodness for my comfort. These are some of his lines* ——— *Your God who hath given you an heart thankfully to record your experiences of his goodness, doth renew experiences for your encouragement. Now I shall report one, which will raise your spirit toward the God of your mercies.* Whereupon he sweetly concludes, *One morsel of Gods provision, especially when it comes in unexpected, and upon prayer, when wants are most, will*

be more sweet to a spiritual relish, than all former enjoyments were.

(3.) The Wisdom of Providence in our provisions. And this is discovered in two things: (1.) In proportioning the quantity, not satisfying our extravagant *wishes*, but answering our real *needs*; consulting our *wants*, not our *wantonness*, Phil. 4. 19. *My God shall supply all your wants*; and this hath exactly suited the wishes of the best and wisest men, who desired no more at its hand. So *Jacob*, *Gen.* 28. 20. and *Agur*, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. Wise Providence considers our condition as *Pilgrims* and *Strangers*, and so allots the *Viaticum* provision, that is needful for our passage home. It knows the mischievous influence of fulness and redundancy upon most men, though sanctified; and how apt it is to make them remiss, and forgetful of God, *Deut.* 6. 12. that their hearts, like the *Moon*, suffers an Eclipse when it is at the full; and so suits and orders all to their best advantage. (2.) Its Wisdom is much discovered in the manner of dispensing our portion to us. It many times suffers our wants to pinch hard, and many fears to arise, out of design to magnifie the care and love of God in the supply, *Deut.* 8. 3. Providence so orders the case, that faith and prayer coming betwixt our wants and supplies, the goodness of God may be the more magnified in our eyes thereby.

And now let me beg you to consider the good hand of Providence, that hath provided for, and suitably supplyed you and yours all your dayes, and never failed you hitherto: and labour to walk suitably to your experiences of such mercies. In order whereunto, let me press a few

a few suitable Cautions upon you.

Beware, that you forget not the care and kindness of Providence which your eyes have seen in so many fruits and experiences thereof. It was Gods charge against *Israel*, Psal. 106. 3. *that they soon forgat his* wondrous *works*. A bad heart and a slippery memory, deprive men of the comfort of many mercies, and defraud God of the glory due for them. (1.)

Do not distrust Providence in future exigencies. Thus they did, Psal. 78. 20. *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed: can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?* How unreasonable and absurd are these queries of unbelief, especially after their eyes had seen the power of God in such extraordinary effects? (2.)

Do not murmur and regret under new straits. This is a vile temper; and yet how incident to us, when wants press hard upon us! Ah! did we but rightly understand what the demerit of sin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God, than complain of the strait-handedness of Providence. And if we did but consider, that there lyes upon God no obligation of Justice or Gratitude to reward any of our duties, it would cure our murmurs, *Gen.* 32. 10. (3.)

Do not shew the least discontent at the lot and portion Providence carves out to you. O that you would be well pleased and satisfied with all its appointments. Say as Psal. 16. 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* Surely that is best for you, which Providence hath appointed, and one day you (4.)

5.) Do not neglect Prayer when straits befall you. You see it's Providence dispenses all, you live upon it; therefore apply your selves to God in the times of need. This is evidently included in the *Promise*, Isa. 41. 17. as well as expressed in the Command, *Phil.* 4. 6. Remember God, and he will not forget you.

6.) Do not distract your hearts with sinful cares, *Matth.* 6. 25, 26. Consider *the fowls of the Air*, (saith Christ) not the fowls at the *Door*, that are daily fed by hand; but those of the *Air*, that know not where to have the next meal; and yet God provides for them. Remember your relation to Christ, and his engagements by promise to you, and by these things work your hearts to satisfaction and content with all the allotments of Providence.

The Eighth Performance of Providence.

VIII.

THe next great advantage and mercy the Saints receive from the hand of Providence, is *in their preservation from the snares, and temptations of sin, by its preventing care over them.* That Providence wards off many a deadly stroke of Temptation, and puts by many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our souls, is a truth as manifest as the light that shineth. This is included in that promise, 1 Cor. 10. 13. God will *with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Providence gives an

dangerous straits of Temptation. There are two eminent wayes whereby the force and efficacy of temptation is broken in believers. One is by the operation of internal grace, Gal. 5. 17. *The Spirit lusteth against the flesh*; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (*i.e.*) Sanctification gives sin a miscarrying womb after it hath conceived in the soul. The other way, is by the external working of Providence; and of this I am here engaged to speak.

The Providence of God is the great *Obex* and hinderance to a world of sin, which else would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures. It prevents abundance of sin, which else wicked men would commit, *Gen.* 19. 11. The *Sodomites* were greedily pursuing their lusts: God providentially hinders it, by smiting them blind. *Jeroboam* intends to smite the *Prophet*; Providence interpos'd, and wither'd his arm, 1 *Kings* 13. 4. Thus you see, when wicked men have contrived, and are ready to execute their wickedness, Providence claps on its manacles, *that their hands cannot perform their enterprises*, as it is *Job* 5. 12.

And so much corruption there remains in good men, that they would certainly plunge themselves under much more guilt than they do, if Providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themselves: for though they make conscience of keeping themselves, and daily watch their hearts and wayes, yet such is the deceitfulness of sin, that if Providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would (more frequently than it doth) entangle and defile them. And this

(1.) Sometimes by stirring up others to interpose with seasonable counsels, which effectually dissuade them from prosecuting an evil design. Thus *Abigail* meets *David* in the nick of time, and dissuades him from his evil purpose, 1 *Sam.* 25. 34.

And I find it recorded (as on another account was noted before) of that holy man Mr. *Dod*, that being late at night in his Study, he was strongly moved (though at an unseasonable hour) to visit a *Gentleman* of his acquaintance; and not knowing what might be the design of Providence therein, he obeyed, and went; when he came to the house, after a few knocks at the door, the *Gentleman* himself came to him, and askt him, whether he had any business to him: Mr. *Dod* answered, no; but that he could not be quiet till he had seen him. O Sir, (reply'd the *Gentleman*,) you are sent of God at this hour, for just now (and with that, takes the Halter out of his pocket,) I was going to destroy my self. And thus was the mischief prevented.

(2.) Sometimes by hindering the Means and Instruments, whereby the Evil it self is prevented. Thus, when good *Jehoshaphat* had joyned himself with that wicked King *Ahaziah*, to build Ships at *Ezion-Gaber* to go to *Tarshish*, God prevents the design, by breaking the Ships with a storm, as you read, 2 *Chron.* 20. 35, 36, 37.

We find also in the Life of Mr. *Bolton*, written by Mr. *Bagshaw*, That whilst he was in *Oxford*, he had familiar acquaintance with Mr. *Anderton*, a good Scholar, but a strong *Popish*, who knowing Mr. *Bolton*'s good parts, and perceiving that he was in some outward wants, took this advan-

tage, and used many arguments to perswade him to be reconciled to the Church of *Rome*, and to go over with him to the *English Seminary*, assuring him he should be furnished with all necessaries, and have gold enough. Mr. *Bolton* being at that time, poor in mind and purse, accepted the motion, and a day and place was appointed in *Lancashire*, where they should meet and take shipping and be gone: but Mr. *Anderton* came not, and so he escaped the snare.

(3.) Sometimes by laying some strong affliction upon the body, to prevent a worse evil. And this is the meaning of *Hosea* 2. 6. *I will hedge up her way with thorns.* Thus *Basil* was a long time exercised with a violent head-ach, which (as he observed) was used by Providence to prevent Lust. *Paul* had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him: and this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

Some afflictions are τιμωρίαι, punishments; others are παιδεῖαι, chastisements, as these are both trials of grace, προφυλακτικὰ, preservatives from sin.

(4.) Sometimes sin is prevented in the Saints by the better information of their minds at the Sacred *Oracles* of God. Thus, when sinful motions began to rise in *David*'s mind, from the prosperity of the wicked, and his own afflicted state, and grew to that height, that he began to think, all he had done in the way of religion was little better than lost labour; he is set right again, and the temptation dissolved, by going into the *Sanctuary*, where God shewed him how to take new measures of persons and things, to judge them by their ends and issues, not their present appearances, *Psal.* 73. 12, 13, 17.

(5.) And sometimes the Providence of God prevents the sins of his people, by removing them out of the way of Temptations by death. In which sense we may understand that Text, Isa. 57. 1. *The Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come*; the evil of *Sin* as well as *Sufferings*. When the Lord sees his people low spirited, and not able to grapple with strong tryals and temptations which are drawing on, it is with respect to them a merciful Providence, to be disbanded by death, and set out of harms way.

Now consider, and admire the Providence of God, O ye Saints, who hath had more care of your souls, than ever ye had of them. Had not the Providence of God thus wrought for you in a way of prevention, it may be you had this day been so many *Magor Missabibs*. How was the heart of *David* melted under that preventing Providence fore-mentioned in 1 *Sam.* 25. 34. He blesses the Lord, the Instrument, and the Counsel by which his soul was preserved from sin. Do but seriously bethink your selves of a few particulars about this case. As,

(1.) How your corrupt natures have often impetuously hurried you on towards sin, so that all the inherent grace you had, could not withstand its force, if Providence had not prevented it in some such method as you have heard, Jam. 1. 14. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.* You found your selves but feathers in the wind of temptation.

(2.) How near you have been brought to the brink of sin, and yet saved by a merciful hand of Providence. May you not say with him in

or as Psal. 73. 2. *My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slidden.* O merciful Providence! that stept in so opportunely to your relief.

(3.) How many have been suffered to fall by the hand of Temptations to the reproach of Religion, and wounding of their own Consciences, to that degree, that they have never recovered former peace again; but lived in the world devoid of comfort to their dying day?

(4.) How woful your case had been, if the Lord had not mercifully saved you from many thousand temptations, that have assaulted you? I tell you, you cannot estimate the mercies you possess by means of such Providences. Are your names sweet, and your Consciences peaceful, two mercies as dear to you as your two eyes? Why surely, you owe them, if not wholly, yet in great measure, to the aids and assistances Providence hath given you all along the way you have passed through the dangerous tempting World to this day.

Walk therefore suitably to this Obligation of Providence also: and see,

(1.) That you thankfully own it. Don't impute your escapes from sin to accidents, or to your own watchfulness or wisdom.

(2.) See that you tempt not Providence on the other hand, by an irregular relyance upon its care over you, without taking all due care of your selves. *Keep your selves in the love of God*, Jude 21. *Keep your hearts with all diligence*, Prov. 4. 23. Though Providence keep you, yet it is in the way of your duty.

The Ninth Performance of Providence.

IX.

Providential preventions of bodily dangers.

THus you see what care Providence hath had over your souls, in *preventing the spiritual dangers and miseries that else would have befallen you in the way of temptations*: in the next place I will shew you, that it hath been *no less careful for your bodies, and with how great tenderness it hath carried them in its arms through innumerable hazards and dangers also.* He is called *the keeper of Israel that never slumbereth nor sleepeth*, Psal. 121. 4. *the preserver of men*, Job. 7. 20. To display the glory of this Providence before you, let us take into consideration, The perils into which the best of men sometimes fall, and the way and means by which Providence preserves them in those dangers.

Psal. 17. 8. *Shou keep-ne as the apple of thine eye.* The eye hath five tunicks to guard it against danger. (1.) *Aranea tunica*, like a Spiders web. (2.) *Retiformis*, like a net. (3.) *Uvea*, like a berry. (4.) *Cornea*, like an horn. (5.) *Adnata tunica*, the cover or lid of the eyes here is guard upon guard, resembling the various wayes Providence hath to secure us from ruine.

There are manifold hazards into which we are often cast in this World. The Apostle *Paul* gives us a general account of his dangers, in 2 *Cor.* 11. 26. And how great a wonder is it, that our life hath not been extinguished in some of those dangers we have been in? For,

(1.) Have not some of us fallen, and that often into very dangerous sicknesses and diseases, in which we have approached to the very brink of the grave? and have or might have said with *Hezekiah*, Isa. 38. 10. *I said in the cutting off of my dayes, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.* Have we not often had the sentence of death in our selves? and our bodies at that time been like a leaky Ship in a storm (as One aptly resembles it) that hath taken in water on every side, till it was ready to sink? Yet hath God preserved, careened, and lanched us out again as well as ever. Oh what a wonder is it, that such a crazy body should be preserved for so many years, and survive so many dangers! Surely, it is not more admirable to see a *Venice-glass* pass from hand to hand in continual use for forty or fifty years, and still to remain whole, notwithstanding many knocks and falls it hath had. If you enjoy health or recover out of sicknesses, it is because *he puts none of these diseases upon thee*, or because he is *the Lord thy Physician*, Exod. 15. 26.

See *Job* 33. 18, 19, 20, 21. & 28.

Mr. *T. Goodwin* in his Aggravation of [illegible] against mercy, p. 30.

The Eye is but a small part of the body, yet Physicians reckon no less than thirty diseases incident to it. *Nascuntur in eo leucoma, glaucoma, lippitudo, xerophthalmia, ficus, lithiasis, epiphora & trignita id genus vitia.*

(2.) And how many deadly dangers hath his hand rescued some of you from, in those years of confusion and publick calamity, when the Sword was bathed in blood, and made horrid slaughter, when it may be, your lives were often given you for a prey? This *David* put a special remarque upon, Psal. 140. 7. *O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of Battel.*

Beza

Beza being in *France* in the first *Civil War*, and there tossed up and down for two and twenty months, recorded six hundred deliverances from dangers in that space, for which he solemnly gave God thanks in his last Testament. If the Sword destroyed you not, it was because God did not give it a Commission so to do.

(3.) Many of you have seen wonders of salvation upon the deeps, where the hand of God hath been signally stretched forth for your rescue and deliverance. This is elegantly expressed in *Psal.* 107. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. (which I have * elsewhere opened at large) concerning which, you may say in a *proper* sense, what the *Psalmist* doth *metaphorically*, Psal. 124. 1. & 4. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul.* To see men that have spent so many years upon the Seas, (where your lives have continually hanged in suspense before you) attain to your years, when you could neither be reckon'd among the *living* nor the *dead* (as Seamen are not) Oh, what cause have you to adore your great preserver! Many thousands of your Companions are gone down, and you yet here to praise the Lord among the Living. You have bordered nearer to Eternity all your dayes than others, and often been in eminent perils upon the Seas, surely such, and so many Salvations call aloud upon you for most thankful acknowledgements.

* See my *Seaman's Companion*, p. 41.

(4.) To conclude, how innumerable hazards and accidents, (the least of which hath cut off others) hath God carried us all through! I think I may safely say, your privative and positive mercies of this kind are more in number than the

hairs

hairs of your heads. Many thousands of these dangers we never saw, nor were made particularly sensible of; but though we saw them not, our God did, and brought us out of *danger*, before he brought us into *fear*. Some have been evident to us, and those so remarkable, that we cannot think, or speak of them to this day, but our souls are freshly affected with those mercies.

It is recorded of our famous *Jewell*, that about the beginning of *Queen Mary*'s Reign, the Inquisition taking hold of him in *Oxford*, he fled to *London* by night; but providentially losing the *Road*, he escaped the *Inquisitors* who pursued him: however, he fell that night into another eminent hazard of life, for wandering up and down in the snow, he fainted, and lay starving in the way, panting and labouring for life, at which time Mr. *Latimer*'s servant found and saved him. Clark's Lives, p. 263.

It were easie to multiply Examples in this kind, Histories abounding with them; but I think there are few of us, but are furnisht out of our own experience abundantly; so that I shall rather chuse to press home the sense of these Providences upon you, in order to a suitable return to the God of your mercies for them, than add more Instances of this kind. To this purpose, I desire you seriously to weigh the following particulars.

(1.) Consider what you owe to Providence for your protection, by which your life hath been protracted unto this day, with the usefulness and comfort thereof. Look abroad in the world, and you may daily see some in every place, who

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are Objects of pity, bereaved by sad accidents of all the comforts of life, whilst in the mean time Providence hath tenderly preserved you, *keeping all your bones, so that not one of them is broken*, Psal. 34. 20. Is not the Elegant and Comely Structure of thy Body spoiled, thy members distorted, or made so many seats of Torment, the usefulness of any part deprived? why, this is because Providence never quitted its hand of thee since thou camest out of the womb, but with a watchful eye and tender hand hath guarded thee in every place, and kept thee as its charge.

dence, in *Theol. Catechet. p.* 191, 192, *&c.* and piously concludes in these words, *Denique, quod ab innumeris malis, quæ ab omnibus creaturis omni tempore tibi impendant, mirabiliter liberaris; in his omnibus inquam, quæ scimus crebro vvenire solita, ac proinde ita se habent, ut nobis quoque possint evenire, solam Dei providentiam debes suspicere & prædicare.*

(2.) Consider, how every member which hath been so tenderly kept, hath nevertheless been an Instrument of sin against the Lord; and that, not only in the dayes of your unregeneracy, when *ye yielded your members as Instruments of unrighteousness unto sin*, (as the *Apostle* speaks in *Rom.* 6. 13.) but even since you gave them up in Covenant unto the Lord, as dedicated Instruments to his service: and yet how tender hath Providence been over them! You have often provoked him to afflict you in every part, and lay *penal* evil upon every member that hath been instrumental in *moral* evil; but O how great have his compassions been towards you, and his patience admirable!

(3.) Consider, what is the aim of Providence in all the tender care it hath manifested for you;

why

why doth it protect you so assiduously, and suffer no evil to befall you? Is it not that you should imploy your bodies for God, and cheerfully apply your selves to that service he hath called you to? Doubtless, this is the end and level of these mercies; for else to what purpose are they afforded you? Your bodies are a part of Christs purchase, as well as your souls, 1 *Cor.* 6. 19. They are committed to the charge and Tutelage of Angels, *Heb.* 1. 14. who have performed many services for them. They are dedicated by your selves to the Lord, and that upon the highest account, *Rom.* 12. 1. They have already been the subjects of manifold mercies in this world, *Psal.* 35. 10. and shall partake of singular glory and happiness in the world to come, *Phil.* 3. 21. And shall they not then be employed, yea, cheerfully worn out in his service? How reasonable is it they should be so? Why are they so tenderly preserved by God, if they must not be used for God?

The Tenth Performance of Providence.

X.

YOu have heard many and great things performed for you by Divine Providence, in the former particulars; but there is an eminent favour it bestows on the Saints, which hath not yet been considered, and indeed is too little minded by us, and that is, *The Aid and assistance it gives the people of God in the great work of Mortification.*

Mortification of our sinful affections and passions, is the one half of our Sanctification, Rom. 6. 11. *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.*

It's the great Evidence of our Interest in Christ. See *Gal.* 5. 24. *Rom.* 6. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

It's our safety in the hour of Temptation. The corruptions in the world are through lust, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

Our Instrumental fitness for service, depends much upon it, 2 *Tim.* 2. 21. *John* 15. 2. How great a service to our souls therefore must that be, by which this blessed work is carried on upon them?

Now there are two Means or Instruments imployed in this work. The *Spirit*, who effects it *internally*, *Rom.* 8. 13. And *Providence*, which assists it *externally*. The *Spirit* indeed is the principal Agent, upon whose operation, the success of this work depends; and all the Providences in the world can never effect it without him.

But

But these are secondary and subordinate means, which by the blessing of the Spirit upon them, have a great stroke in the work. How they are so serviceable to this end and purpose, I shall open in the following account.

(1.) More generally. The most wise God orders the dispensations of Providence in a blessed subordination to the work of his Spirit. There is a sweet harmony betwixt them in their distinct workings. They all meet in that one blessed issue which God hath by the counsel of his Will directed them to, *Eph.* 1. 11. *Rom.* 8. 28. Hence it is, that the Spirit is said to be in, and order the motions of the wheels of Providence, *Ezek.* 1. 20. and so they move together by consent. Now, one great part of the Spirit's internal work, being to destroy sin in the people of God; see how conformable to his design external Providences are steer'd and order'd in the following particulars.

(1.) There is in all the regenerate a strong propension and inclination to sin, and in that lyes a principal part of the power of sin. Of this *Paul* sadly complains, Rom. 7. 23. *But I see another Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the Law of sin, which is in my members:* and every believer daily finds it to his grief. O 'tis hard, 'tis hard to forbear those things that grieve God. God hath made an hedge about us, and fenced us against sin by his Laws; but there is a proneness in nature to break over the hedge, and that against the very reluctations of the Spirit of God in us. Now, see in this case, the concurrence and assistance of Providence, for the prevention

of sin; look, as the Spirit internally resists those sinful inclinations, so Providence externally layes barrs and blocks in our way to hinder and prevent sin: and this is the meaning of those places lately cited, *Hosea* 2. 6. & 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. So *Job* 33. 17, 18, 19. There is many a bodily distemper inflicted on this very score, to be a clog to prevent sin: Oh bear them patiently upon this consideration. *Basil* was sorely grieved with an inveterate head-ach, he earnestly prayes, it might be removed; God removed it: but no sooner was he freed of this clog, but he felt the inordinate motions of lust; which made him pray for his head-ach again. So it might be with many of us, if our clogs were off.

A Question may be moved here, *Whether it be the genius and property of a gracious spirit, to forbear sin, because of the rod of affliction?* They have surely higher motives and nobler principles than these. This is the temper of a carnal and slavish spirit.

Indeed it is so, when this is the sole or principal restraint from sin: when a man abhorrs not sin, because of the intrinsick *filth*, but only because of the troublesome *consequents* and *effects*. But this is vastly different from the case of the Saints under sanctified afflictions; for as they have *higher* motives and *nobler* principles, so they have *lower* and more *sensible* ones too; and these are, in their kind and place, very useful to them. (2.) Besides, you must know, that afflictions work in another way upon gracious hearts to restrain them from sin, or warn them against sin, than they do upon others. It is not so much

the

the smart of the rod which they feel, as the tokens of Gods displeasure, which affrights and scares them, Job 10. 17. *Thou renewest thy witnesses against me*, &c. and this is that which principally affects them. See Psal. 6. 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure:* and Jer. 10. 24. *O Lord, correct me, but with judgement, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing:* and surely this is no low and common argument.

(2.) Notwithstanding this double fence of Gods command, and preventive afflictions, yet sin is too hard for the best of men: their corruptions carry them through all to sin. And when it is so, not only doth the *Spirit* work internally, but *Providence* also works externally in order to their *reduction*. The wayes of sin are not only made bitter unto them, by the remorse of Conscience, but by those afflictive rods upon the outward man, with which God also follows it, and in both these respects, I find that place expounded, Eccles. 10. 8. *Whoso breaketh an hedge, a Serpent shall bite him.* If, as some expound it, the *hedge* be the *Law* of God, then the *Serpent* is the *remorse* of Conscience, and the sharp teeth of *affliction*, which he shall quickly feel, if he be one that belongs to God.

The design and aim of these afflictive Providences, is to purge and cleanse them from that pollution into which temptations have plunged them, Isa. 27. 9. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.* To the same purpose is that place, Psal. 119. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.* These afflictions [illegible]

the same use and end to our souls, that frosty weather hath upon those clothes that are laid a bleaching; they alter the hue, and make it whiter, which seems to be the allusion in those words, Dan. 11. 35. *And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge, and to make them white.*

And here it may be queried, *Upon what account afflictions are said to purge away the iniquities of the Saints. Is it not unwarrantable, and very dishonourable to Christ, to attribute that to affliction, which is the peculiar honour of his blood?*

It is confessed, that the blood of Christ is the only *Lavatory*, or Fountain opened for sin, and that no afflictions how many, or strong, or continual soever they be, can in themselves purge away the pollution of sin, as we see in wicked men, who are afflicted and afflicted, and again afflicted; and yet, nevertheless sinful: and the Torments of Hell, how extream, universal and continual soever they are, yet shall never fetch out the stain of one sin.

But yet, this hinders not, but that a sanctified affliction, may in the efficacy and vertue of *Christ's* blood, produce such blessed effects upon the soul. Though a *Cross* without a *Christ*, never did any man good, yet thousands have been beholden to the *Cross*, as it hath wrought in the vertue of his death for their good. And this is the case of those souls that this discourse is concerned about.

(3.) We find the best hearts, if God bestow any comfortable enjoyment upon them, too ap-

and to be too much taken up with these outward comforts. This also sheweth the great power and strength of corruption in the people of God, and must by some means or other be mortified in them.

This was the case of *Hezekiah*, his heart was too much affected with his treasures; so that he could not hide a vain-glorious temper, as you find *Isa.* 39. 2. and so good *David*, *Psal.* 30. 7. he thought his Mountain, (*i.e.* his Kingdom, and the splendour and glory of his present state) had stood so fast, that it should never be moved.

The same good man, how did he let out his heart and affections upon his beautiful Son *Absalom?* as appears by the doleful lamentation he made at his death, prizing him above his own life, which was a thousand times more worth than he.

So *Jonah*, when God raised up a *Gourd* for him to shelter him from the Sun, how excessively was he taken with it, and was exceedingly glad of it?

But will God suffer things to lye thus? Shall the Creature purloin, and draw away our affections from him? No, this is our corruption, and God will purge it. And to this end he sends forth Providence to smite those Creatures, on which our affections are either inordinately or excessively let out, or else to turn them into rods, and smite us by them.

Is *Hezekiah* too much puffed up with his full Exchequer? Why, those very *Babylonians* to whom he boasted of it, shall empty it, and make a prey of it, *Isa.* 39. 6.

Is *David* hugging himself in a fond conceit of

doted on, and crept too far into his good Fathers heart? this shall be the Son of his sorrow, that shall seek after his Fathers life.

Is *Jonah* so transported with his Gourd? God will prepare a Worm to smite it, *Jonah* 4. 6, 7.

How many Husbands, Wives and Children hath Providence smitten upon this very account? It might have spared them longer, if they had been loved more regularly, and moderately. This hath blasted many an Estate, and hopeful project; and it is a merciful dispensation for our good.

(4.) The strength of our unmortified Corruption shews it self in our pride, and the swelling vanity of our hearts when we have a name and esteem among men; when we are applauded and honoured, when we are admired for any gift or excellency that is in us, this draws forth the pride of the heart, and shews the vanity that is in it. So you read, Prov. 27. 21. *As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise*: (i. e.) as the fornace will discover what dross is in the metal when it is melted, so will praise and commendations discover what pride is in the heart of him that receives them. This made a good man say, *He that praises me, wounds me.* And which is more strange, this corruption may be felt in the heart, even when the last breath is ready to expire. It was the saying of one of the *German Divines*, when those about him recounted for his encouragement the many services he had done for God, *auferte istum* (saith he) *adhuc enim paleas habet. Take away this for*

the bridle of restraint from ungodly men, and sometimes permits them to traduce the names of Gods servants, as *Shimei* did *David's*. Yea, they shall fall into disesteem among their friends, as *Paul* did among the *Corinthians*; and all this to keep down the swelling of their spirits at the sense of those excellencies that are in them: The design of these Providences being nothing else, but to *hide pride from man*. Yea, it deserves a special remarque, that when some good men have been engaged in a publick and eminent work, and have therein, it may be, too much sought their own applause, God hath withheld usual assistance at such times from them, and caused them to falter so in their work, that they have come off with shame and pity at such times, how ready and presential soever they have been at other times. It were ease to give divers remarkable examples to confirm this Observation. But I pass on.

(5.) The corruption of the heart shews it self, in raising up great expectations to our selves from the Creature, and projecting abundance of felicity and contentment from some promising and hopeful enjoyments we have in the world. This we find to have been the case of holy *Job* in the dayes of his prosperity, Job 28. 19. *Then I said, I shall dye in my nest, I shall multiply my dayes as the sand.* But how soon were all these expectations dasht by a gloomy Providence, that benighted him in the Noon-tide of his prosperity: and all this for his good, to take off his heart more fully from creature expectations. We often

often find, the best men to over-reckon themselves in worldly things, and over-act their confidence about them. They that have great and well-grounded expectations from *Heaven*, may have too great and ungrounded expectations from the *Earth*. But when it is so, it's very usual for Providence to undermine their Earthly hopes, and convince them by experience how vain they are. Thus *Haggai* 1. 9. the peoples hearts were intently set upon prosperous Providences, full Harvests, and great Increase; whilst in the mean while no regard was had to the Worship of God, and the things of his House; therefore Providence blasts their hopes, and brings them to little.

(6.) Corruption discovers it self in dependance upon Creature comforts, and sensible props. Oh how apt are the best men, to lean upon these things, and stay themselves upon them! Thus did *Israel* stay themselves upon *Egypt*, as a feeble man would lean upon his staff; but God suffered it both to fail them, and wound them, *Ezek.* 29. 6, 7, 8. So for single persons, how apt are they to depend upon their sensible supports? Thus we lean on our Relations, and the inward thoughts of our hearts are, that they shall be to us so many springs of comfort to refresh us throughout our lives; but God will shew us by his Providence our mistake and error in these things. Thus an Husband is smitten, to draw the soul of a Wife nearer to God in dependence upon him, 1 *Tim.* 5. 5. So for Children, we are apt to say of this or that *Child*, as *Lamech* of *Noah*, Gen. 5. 29. *This same shall comfort us*; but the wind passes over these flowers and they are

withered, to teach us, that our happiness is not bound up in these enjoyments. So for our *Estates*, when the world smiles upon us, and we have got a warm nest, how do we prophesie of rest and peace in those acquisitions, minding, with good *Baruch*, great things for our selves; but Providence by a particular or general calamity over-turns our projects, as *Jer.* 45. 4, 5. and all this to reduce our hearts from the Creature, to God our only rest.

(7.) Corruption discovers its strength in good men, by their *adherence* to things below, and lothness to go hence. This often proceeds from the engaging enjoyments and pleasant fruitions we have here below. Providence mortifies this inclination in the Saints, (1.) By killing those ensnaring comforts before-hand, making all or most of our pleasant things to dye before us. (2.) By imbittering this world to us, by the troubles of it. (3.) By making life undesirable, through the pains and infirmities we feel in the body, and so loosing our root, in order to our more easie fall by the fatal stroke.

And thus I have finished the Second General Head; but before I pass from this, I cannot but make a pause, and desire you with me, to stand in an holy amazement, and wonder at the dealings of God with such poor worms as we are! Surely God deals familiarly with men! his condescensions to his own clay are astonishing! All that I shall note at present about it, shall be under these three heads, wherein I find the matter of my present meditations summed up by the *Psalmist*, Psal. 144. 3. *Lord what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that*

thou makest account of him? And in this Scripture you have represented,

(1.) The immense and transcendent goodness of God, who is infinitely above us and all our thoughts, Job 11. 7, 8, 9. *Canst thou by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* 2 Chron. 2. 6. *The Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him.* Exod. 15. 11. *He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.* When the Scripture speaks of him comparatively, see how it expresses his greatness, Isa. 40. 15, 16, 17. *Behold the Nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the Isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the Beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All Nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing and vanity.* When the holiest men have addrest themselves to him, see with what humility and deep adoration they have spoken of him and to him! Isa. 6. 5. *Wo is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts.* Nay, what aspects the very Angels of Heaven have of that glorious Majesty, you may see, Ver. 2, 3. *Each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cryed unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his glory.*

The

The baseness, vileness and utter unworthiness (2.)
of Man, yea, the holiest and best of men before God, Psal. 39. 5. *Verily every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity. Every man*, take where you will: and every man *in his best estate*, or standing in his freshest glory, is, not only *vanity*, but *altogether* vanity. *Col Adam col Hebel*, every man is every vanity. For do but consider the best of men in their *Extraction*, in their *Constitution*, and in their outward *Condition*.

(1.) In their *Extraction*, Eph. 2. 3. *By nature Children of wrath even as others.* The blood that runs in our veins, is as much tainted as theirs in Hell.

(2.) Consider them in their *Constitution* and natural temper, and it is no better, yea, in many a worse temper than in Reprobates: and though grace depose sin in them from the Throne; yet Oh what offensive and God provoking corruptions daily break out of the best hearts!

(3.) Consider them in their *outward Condition*, and they are inferiour (for the most part) to others, 1 *Cor.* 1. 26, 27, 28, *&c.* and *Matth.* 11. 25. *I thank thee O Father* (saith Christ) *that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.*

And now let us consider and admire, that ever (3.)
his great and blessed God should be so much concerned as you have heard he is in all his Providences about such vile despicable Worms as we are! He needs us not, but is perfectly blessed and happy in himself without us. We can add nothing to him, Job. 22. 2. *Can a man be profitable to God?* No, the holiest of men add nothing to him;

him; yet, see how great account he makes of us. For,

(1.) Doth not his eternal electing love bespeak the dear account he made of us, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. How ancient, how free, and how astonishing is this act of grace! This is that design which all Providences are in pursuit of, and will not rest till they have executed.

(2.) Doth not the gift of his *only Son* out of his bosome speak this truth, That God makes great account of this vile thing Man? Never was man so magnified before. If *David* could say, Psal. 8. 3. *When I consider the Heavens the work of thy hands, the Moon and Stars which thou hast ordained, Lord, what is man?* How much more may we say? when we consider thy *Son*, that lay in thy bosome, his infinite excellency, and unspeakable dearness to thee; Lord, what is man, that such a *Christ* should be delivered to death for him! for *him*, and not for fallen *Angels*! Heb. 2. 16. for *him* when in a state of enmity with God! *Rom.* 5. 8.

(3.) Doth not the assiduity of his Providential care for us, speak his esteem of us? Isa. 27. 3. *I keep it, I will keep it night and day.* He *withdraweth not his eye from the righteous*, Job 36. 7. no, not a moment all their dayes; for did he so, a thousand mischiefs in that moment would rush in upon him, and ruine him.

(4.) Doth not the tenderness of his Providence speak his esteem of us? Isa. 66. 13. *As one whom his Mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.* He comforts his (*viz.* by refreshing Providences) as an indulgent Mother her tender Child. So Isa.

31, 5

31. 5. *As birds flying*, viz. to their nests, when their young are in danger, *so he defends his.* No siryn tenderness in the Creature can shadow forth the tender bowels of the Creator.

Doth not the variety of the fruits of his Providence speak it? Lam. 3. 23. *Our mercies are new every morning.* See *Psal.* 40. 5. It is a fountain from which do stream forth spiritual and temporal, ordinary and extraordinary, publick and personal mercies, mercies without number. (5.)

Doth not the ministration of *Angels* in the Providential Kingdom speak it? Heb. 1. ult. *Are they not all ministring spirits sent forth,* &c. (6.)

Doth not the Providence, which this day calls us to celebrate the memory of, bespeak the great account God hath for his people? O if not so, why had we not been given up as a prey to their teeth! See *Psal.* 124. If the Lord had not been on our side, then wicked men, there compar'd to fire, water, wild beasts, had devoured us. O blessed be God for that teeming Providence that hath already brought forth more than seventy years liberty and peace to the Church of God. I shall move in behalf of this Providence, that you would do by it, as the Jews by their *Purim*, *Esth.* 9. 27, 28. and the rather, because we seem now to be as near danger by the same Enemy as ever since that time: and if such a mercy as this be forgotten, God may say as Judges 10. 13. *I will deliver you no more.* (7.) Preached Novemb. V.

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The Third General Head.

HAving proved the Concernments of the people of God to be conducted by the care of ſpecial Providence, and given Inſtances in the ten laſt named Heads; what influence Providence hath upon thoſe Intereſts and concerns of theirs among the reſt; we come in the next place, to prove it to be the duty of the people of God, to reflect upon theſe performances of Providence for them, at all times; but eſpecially in times of ſtraits and troubles.

This I will evidence to be your unqueſtionable duty, by the following particulars.

(1.) This is our duty, becauſe God hath expreſly commanded it, and called his people to make the moſt ſerious reflections, and animadverſions upon his works, whether of mercy or judgement. So when that dreadfulleſt of all Judgements was executed upon his profeſſing people for their Apoſtaſie from God, and God had removed the Symbols of his preſence from among them, the reſt are bid to go, (*i. e.*) by their meditations, (to ſend at leaſt their thoughts) to *Shiloh*, and *ſee what God did to it*, Jer. 7. 12. So for mercies, God calls us to conſider and review them, Micah 6. 5. *Remember O my people from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the faithfulneſs of the Lord*: *q. d.* if you reflect not upon that ſignal Providence, my faithfulneſs will be covered, and

your unfaithfulness discovered. So for Gods works of Providence about the Creatures, we are called to consider them, that we may prop up our faith by those considerations for our own supplies, *Matth.* 6. 28. consider the Fowls and Lillies.

It's plain, that this is our duty, because the neglect of it is every where in Scripture condemned as a sin. To be of an heedless inobservant temper is very displeasing to God; and so much appears by that Scripture, Isa. 26. 11. *Lord when thy hand is lifted up they will not see.* Nay, it is a sin, which God threatens and denounces woe against in his Word, *Psal.* 28. 4, 5. and *Isa.* 5. 12, 13. Yea, God not only threatens, but smites men with visible Judgements for this sin, *Job* 34. 26, 27. (2.) (4.)

And for this end and purpose it is, that the Holy Ghost hath affixed those notes of attention to the narratives of the works of Providence in *Scripture*: all which do invite and call men to a due and deep observation of them. So in that great and celebrated work of Providence, in delivering *Israel* out of *Egyptian* bondage, you find a note of *attention* twice affixed to it, *Exod.* 3. 2, 9. So when that daring Enemy *Rabshakeh* (that put *Hezekiah* and all the people into such a consternation) was defeated by Providence, there is a note of *attention* prefixt to that Providence, 2 Kings 19. 7. *Behold, I will send a blast upon him*, &c. So when God glorifies his wisdom and power, in delivering his people from their Enemies, and ensnaring them in the works of their own hands, a double note of *attention* is affixed to that double work of Providence, *Psal.* 9. 16. (3.)

higgaion selah. So at the opening of every seal which contains a remarkable series or branch of Providence, how particularly is attention commanded to every one of them, Rev. 6. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. *Come and see, come and see.* All these are very useless and superfluous additions in Scripture, if no such duty lyes upon us. See *Psal.* 66. 5.

(4.) Without due observation of the work of Providence, no praise can be rendered to God for any of them. Praise and thanksgiving for mercies depend upon this act of observation of them, and cannot be performed without it. *Psalm* 107. is spent in narratives of Gods Providential care of men: To his people in straits, *Ver.* 4, 5, 6. To prisoners in their bonds, *Ver.* 10, 11, 12. To men that lye languishing upon beds of sickness, *Ver.* 17, 18, 19. To Seamen upon the stormy Ocean, *Ver.* 23, &c. To men in times of famine, *Ver.* 33. to *Ver.* 40. Yea, his Providence is displayed in all those changes that fall out in the world, debasing the high, and exalting the low, *Ver.* 40, 41. and at every paragraph men are still called upon to praise God for each of these Providences: but *Ver.* 43. shews you what a necessary ingredient to that duty, observation is. *Whose is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.* So that of necessity, God must be defrauded of his praise, if this duty be neglected.

(5.) Without this, we lose the usefulness and benefit of all the works of God for us or others, which would be an unspeakable loss indeed to us. This is the food our faith lives upon in dayes of distress, Psal. 74. 14. *Thou brakest the*

heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the Wilderness? (i. e.) food to their faith. From Providences past, Saints use to argue to fresh, and new ones to come. So *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 37. *The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the Lyon, and out of the paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistim.* So *Paul*, 2 Cor. 1. 10. *Who hath delivered, and in whom we trust that he will yet deliver.* If these be forgotten or not considered, the hands of faith hang down. See Matth. 16. 9. *How is it that ye do not remember, neither consider?* This is a *Topick* from which the Saints have used to draw their Arguments in prayer for new mercies. As *Moses*, Numb. 14. 19. when he prayes for continued or new pardons for the people, he argues from what was past, *As thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now.* So the Church, *Isa.* 51. 9, 10. argues for new Providences upon the same ground *Moses* pleaded for new pardons. (5.)

It is a vile slighting of God, not to observe what of himself he manifests in his Providences. For in all Providences, especially in some, he comes nigh to us. He doth so in his Judgements, Mal. 3. 5. *I will come nigh to you in judgement.* He comes nigh in mercies also, Psal. 145. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him*, &c. Yea, he is said to visit us by his Providence when he corrects, *Hosea* 9. 7. and when he saves and delivers, *Psal.* 106. 4. These visitations of God preserve our spirits, *Job.* 10. 12. And it is a wonderful condescension in the great God to visit us so often, Job 7. 18. *every morning, and every moment.* But not to take notice of (6.)

it, is a vile and brutish contempt of God, *Isa.* 1. 3. *Zeph.* 3. 2. You would not do so by a man for whom you have any respect. It's the character of the wicked, not to regard Gods favours, *Isa.* 26. 10. or frowns, *Jer.* 5. 3.

(7.) In a word, men can never order their addresses to God in prayer, suitable to their conditions, without due *observation* of his Providences. Your prayers are to be suitable to your conditions: sometimes we are called to praise, sometimes to humiliation. In the way of his Judgements you are to wait for him, *Isa.* 26. 8. to prepare to meet him, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. *Amos* 4. 12. Now your business is, to turn away his anger which you see approaching. And sometimes you are called to praise him for mercies received, *Isa.* 12. 1, 2. but then you must first observe them.

Thus you find the matter of *David's* Psalms still varied, according to the Providences that befell him: but an inobservant heedless spirit can never do it. And thus you have the grounds of the Duty briefly represented; we pass on to

(8)

The Fourth General Head.

LEt us next (according to our method propoſed) proceed to ſhew, in what manner we are to reflect upon the *performances of Providence* for us. And certainly, it is not every ſlight and tranſient glance, nor every cold, hiſtorical, unaffecting rehearſal, or recognition of his Providences towards you, that will paſs with God, for a diſcharge of this great duty. No, no, it is another manner of buſineſs than the moſt of men underſtand it to be. O that we were but acquainted with this heavenly ſpiritual exerciſe! how ſweet would it make our lives! how light would it make our burdens! Ah Sirs! you live eſtranged from the pleaſure of the Chriſtian life, while you live in the ignorance or neglect of this duty. Now to lead you up to this heavenly, ſweet and profitable exerciſe, I will beg your attention to the following Directions.

The Firſt Direction.

LAbour to get as full and through recognitions of the Providences of God about you from firſt to laſt, as you are able. O fill your hearts with the thoughts of him and his wayes. If a ſingle act of Providence be ſo raviſhing and tranſporting, what would many ſuch be, if they were preſented to-

gether to the view of the ſoul? If one *Star* be ſo beautiful to behold, what is a *Conſtellation?* Let your reflections therefore upon the acts and workings of Providence for you, be full *extenſively* and *intenſively*.

(1.) Let them be as *extenſively* full as may be. Search backward into all the performances of Providence throughout your lives. So did *Aſaph* in Pſal. 77. 11, 12. *I will remember the works of the Lord: ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.* He laboured to recover and revive the ancient Providences of God, mercies many years paſt, and ſuck a freſh ſweetneſs out of them by new reviews of them. Ah Sirs, let me tell you, there is not ſuch a pleaſant *Hiſtory* for you to read in all the world, as the *Hiſtory* of your own lives, if you would but ſit down, and record to your ſelves from the beginning hitherto, what God hath been to you, and done for you; what ſignal manifeſtations, and out-breakings of his mercy, faithfulneſs and love, there have been in all the conditions you have paſt through: if your hearts do not melt before you have gone half through that Hiſtory, they are hard hearts indeed. *My father, the guide of my youth.*

(2.) Let them be as *intenſively* full as may be. Let not your thoughts ſwim like *feathers* upon the ſurface of the waters, but ſink like *lead* to the bottom. *The works of the Lord are great, ſought out of them that have pleaſure therein,* Pſal. 111. 2. Not that I think it feaſible to ſound the depth of Providence by our ſhort line, Pſal. 77. 19. *Thy way is in the ſea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footſteps are not known;* but it's our

duty to dive as far as we can; and to admire the depth, when we cannot touch the bottom. It is in our viewing Providences, as it was with *Elijah's* servant, when he looked out for rain, 1 *Kings* 18. 44. he went but once and viewed the Heavens, and saw nothing; but the *Prophet* bids him go again and again, and look upon the face of Heaven seven times; and when he had done so, what now, saith the *Prophet*? O now, saith he, *I see a cloud rising like a mans hand*; and then, keeping his eye upon it intent, he sees the whole face of Heaven covered with clouds. So you may look upon some Providences once and again, and see little or nothing in them; but look *seven times*, (i. e.) *meditate often* upon it, and you shall see its increasing glory, like that increasing cloud.

There are divers things to be distinctly pondered, and valued in one single Providence, before you can judge the amount and worth of it: as (1.) The *seasonableness* of mercy may give it a very great value. When it shall be timed so opportunely, and fall out in such a nick, as may make it a thousand fold more considerable to you than the same mercy would have been at another time. Thus when our wants are suffered to grow to an extremity, and all visible hopes fail, then to have relief given in, wonderfully enhances the price of such a mercy, *Isa.* 41. 17, 18.

(2.) The *peculiar care* and kindness of Providence to us, is a consideration which exceedingly heightens the mercy in it self, and endears it to us. So, when in general calamities upon the world, we are exempted by the favour of Providence, covered under its wings; when God shall

still to us in evil dayes, *Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers*, as it is in *Isa.* 26. 20, 21. When such promises shall be fulfilled to us in times of want and famine, as *Psal.* 33. 18, 19. When others are abandoned and exposed to misery, who have every way as much, it may be much more visible security against it; and yet they delivered up, and we saved: Oh, how endearing are such Providences! *Psal.* 91. 7, 8.

(3.) The *Introductiveness* of a Providence, is of special regard and consideration, and by no means to be neglected by us. There are leading Providences, which how slight and trivial soever they may seem in themselves, yet in this respect justly challenge the first rank among Providential favours to us; because they usher in a multitude of other mercies, and draw a blessed train of happy consequences after them. Such a Providence was that of *Jesse*'s sending *David* with provisions to his Brethren that lay encamped in the Army, 1 *Sam.* 17. 17. And thus every Christian may furnish himself out of his own stock of Experience, if he will but reflect, and consider, the Place where he is, the Relations that he hath, and the Way by which he was led into them.

(4.) The *Instruments* imployed by Providence for you, are of special consideration. And the finger of God is clearly seen by us when we pursue that meditation. For,

Sometimes great mercies shall be conveyed to us by very improbable means, and more probable ones laid aside. A *stranger* shall be stirred up to do that for you, which your near relations in nature had no power or will to do for you. *Ittai*, a meer stranger to *David*, clave closer

to him, and was more friendly and useful to him, than his own Brethren, who despised and slighted him. Ministers have found more kindness and respect from strangers, than their own people that are more obliged to them, Mark 6. 4. *A Prophet* (saith Christ) *is not without honour, save in his own Country, and among his own Kin, and in his own House.*

Sometimes by the hands of *Enemies*, as well as Strangers, Rev. 12. 16. *The Earth helped the Woman.* God hath bowed the hearts of many wicked men, to shew great kindness to his people, *Acts* 28. 2.

Sometimes God makes use of Instruments for good to his people, who designed nothing but evil and mischief to them. Thus *Joseph's* Brethren were instrumental to his advancement, in *that very thing*, wherein they designed his *ruine*, *Gen.* 50. 20.

(5.) The *design* and *scope* of Providence must not escape our through consideration, what the aim and level of Providence is. And truly this, of all others, is the most warming and melting consideration. You have the general account of the aim of all Providences, in Rom. 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.* A thousand friendly hands are at work for them, to promote and bring about their happiness. O, this is enough to sweeten the bitterest Providence to us, that we know it shall turn to our salvation, *Phil.* 1. 19.

(6.) The *respect* and *relation* Providence bears to our *prayers*, is of singular consideration, and a most taking and sweet meditation. *Prayer* honours Providence, and Providence honours

Pra-

Prayer. Great notice is taken of this in Scripture, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Dan.* 9. 20. *Acts* 12. 12. You have had the *very Petitions* you *asked* of him. Providences have born the very signatures of your Prayers upon them. O how affectingly sweet are such mercies!

The Second Direction.

IN all your Observations of Providence, have a special respect to that Word of God, which is fulfilled and made good to you thereby.

This is a clear truth, that all Providences have relation to the written Word. Thus *Solomon* in his prayer, acknowledges, that the Promises and Providences of God went along step by step with his Father *David* all his dayes; and that his hand (put there for his Providence) had fulfilled whatever his mouth had spoken, 1 *Kings* 8. 24. So *Joshuah* in like manner acknowledges, that *not one good thing had failed, of all the good things which the Lord had spoken*, Jos. 23. 14. He had carefully observed what relation the *Works* of God had to his *Word*. He compared them together, and found an exact harmony. And so may you too, if you will compare them as he did.

This I shall the more insist upon, because it is by some *Interpreters* supposed to be the very Scope of the Text. For (as was noted in the Explication) they supply and fill the sense with *gave promise*, the things which he hath promised; and so read the Text thus, *I will cry unto God*

most high, to God who performeth the things he hath promised, *for me.*

Now though I see no reason to limit the sense so narrowly, yet it cannot be denyed, but this is an especial part of its intendment. Let us therefore in all our reviews of Providence, consider, what word of God, whether it be of threatning, caution, counsel, or promise is at any time made good to us by his Providences. And hereby a twofold excellent advantage will result to us.

(1.) This will greatly confirm to us the truth of the Scripture, when we shall see its truth so manifest in the events. Certainly had *Scripture* no other seal or attestation, this alone would be an unanswerable Argument of its divinity. When men shall find in all ages the works of God wrought so exactly according to this model, that we may say, As we have read or heard, so have we seen. O how great a confirmation is here before our eyes!

(2.) This will abundantly direct and instruct us in our present duties under all Providences. We shall know hereby what we have to do, and how to carry our selves under all changes of conditions. You can learn the voice and errand of the *rod* only from the Word, *Psal.* 94. 12. The Word interprets the works of God. Providences in themselves, are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the Word, and your duty will be quickly manifested, as *Psal.* 73. 16, 17. *Until I went into the Sanctuary, then I understood their end*; and, not only their *end*; but his own *duty*, to be quiet in an afflicted condition, and not envy their prosperity.

Well then, bring those Providences you have past through, or are now under, to the Word; and you will find your selves surrounded with a marvellous light; and see the verification of the Scriptures in them. I shall therefore here appeal to your consciences, whether you have not found these Events of Providence falling out agreeably in all respects with the Word.

(1.) The Word tells you, that it is your Wisdom and Interest, to keep close to its rules, and the duties it prescribes, that the way of holiness and obedience, is the wisest way, Deut. 4. 5, 6. *This is your wisdom.*

Now, let the events of Providence speak, whether this be true or not. Certainly it will appear to be so, whether we respect our *present comfort*, or *future happiness*, both which we may be daily exposed by departure from duty, and secured by keeping close to it. Let the question be asked of the *Drunkard*, *Adulterer*, or prophane *Swearer*, when by sin they have ruined body, soul, estate and name, whether it be their wisdom to walk in those forbidden paths after their own lusts? Whether they had not better consulted their own interest and comfort, in keeping within the bounds and limits of Gods commands? and they cannot but confess, that *this their way is their folly.* *What fruit* (saith the Apostle) *had ye in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death,* Rom. 6. 21. Doth not the Providence of God verifie upon them those threatnings that are written, in the experience of all ages? *Prov.* 23. 29. *Prov.* 23. 21. *Prov.* 5. 9. *Job* 31. 12. *Prov.* 5. 10. all which woes and miseries

escape, that walk in Gods Statutes. Look upon the ruined estates and bodies you may every where see, and behold the truth of the Scriptures evidently made good in those sad Providences.

(2.) The Word tells you, that your departure from the way of integrity and simplicity, to make use of sinful policies, shall never profit you, 1 *Sam.* 12. 21. *Prov.* 3. 5.

(3.) Let the Events of Providence speak to this also; ask your own experience, and you shall have a full confirmation of this truth. Did you ever leave the way of simplicity and integrity, and use sinful shifts, to bring about your own designs, and prosper in that way? Certainly God hath cursed all the wayes of sin; and whoever finds them to thrive with them, his people shall not. *Israel* would not rely upon the Lord; but trust in the shadow of *Egypt*; and what advantage had they by this sinful policy? See *Isa.* 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *David* used a great deal of sinful policy to cover his wicked fact; but did it prosper? See 2 *Sam.* 12. 12. It is an excellent note of *Livy*, *Consilia callida, primâ specie læta, tractatione dura, eventu tristia.* Sinful policies in their first appearances, are pleasant and promising, in their management difficult, in their event sad. Some by sinful wayes have gotten wealth; but that Scripture hath been verified in their experience, Prov. 10. 2. *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing.* Either God hath blown upon it by a secret curse, that it hath done them no good, or given them such disquietness in their consciences, that they have been forced to vomit it up, e're they could find peace, *Job* 11. 13, 14, 15.

That which *David* gave in charge to *Solomon*,

hath

hath been found experimentally true by thousands, 2 Chron. 12. 12, 13. That the true way to prosperity, is to keep close to the rule of the Word. And that the true reason why men cannot prosper, is their forsaking that rule, 2 Chron. 24. 20.

It's true, if God have a purpose to destroy a man, he may for a time suffer him to succeed and prosper in his sin, for his greater hardening, Jer. 12. 1. But it is not so with those whom the Lord loves; their sinful shifts shall never thrive with them.

(3.) The World prohibits your trust and confidence in the Creature, even the greatest and most powerful among Creatures, Psal. 146. 3. Tells us, that 'tis better to trust in the Lord, than in them, Psal. 118. 8. It forbids our confidence in those Creatures that are most nearly ally'd, and related in the bonds of nature to us, Micah 7. 5. It curseth the man that gives that relyance to the Creature, which is due to God, Jer. 17. 5.

Consult the Events of Providence in this case, and see, whether the Word be not verified therein? Did you ever lean upon an Egyptian reed, and it did not break under you, and pierce as well as deceive you? O how often hath this been evident in our experience! Whatsoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God hath from time to time broken it, and made us to see the vanity of it; so that we find, the readiest course to be rid of our comforts, is to set our hearts inordinately or immoderately upon them: for our God is a jealous God, and will not part with his glory to another. The World is full of examples of persons deprived of their com-

forts,

sorts, Husbands, Wives, Children, Estates, &c. upon this account, and by this means. If Jonah be over-joyed in his Gourd, a Worm is presently prepared to smite it. Hence it is, that so many graves are opened for the burying of our Idols out of our sight. If David say, *My mountain shall stand strong, I shall not be moved*; the next news he shall hear, is of darkness and trouble, Psal. 30. 6, 7. O how true and faithful do we find these sayings of God to be! Who cannot put to his seal, and say, *Thy words are truth?*

(4.)

The Word assures us, that sin is the Cause and Mother of Affliction and Sorrow, and that there is an inseparable connection betwixt them. Numb. 32. 23. *Be sure your sin will find you out.* (i. e.) the said effects and afflictions that follow it shall find you out. So Psal. 89. 30, 31, 32. *If his children forsake my Law, I will visit their iniquities with rods.*

Inquire now at the mouth of Providence, whether this be indeed so, according to the reports of the Word. Ask but your own Experiences, and you shall find, that just so Providence hath ordered it all along your way. When did you grow into a secure, vain, carnal frame, but you found some rouzing, startling Providence sent to awaken you? When did you wound your Conscience with guilt, and God did not wound you for it, in some or other of your beloved enjoyments? Nay, so ordinary is this with God, that from the observations of their own frames and ways, many Christians have fore-boded and presaged trouble at hand.

I do not say, that God never afflicts his people, but for their sin; for he may do it for their

tryal,

tryal, 1 *Per.* 4. 12. Nor do I say, that God follows every sin with a rod; for who then should stand before him? *Psal.* 130. 3. But this I say, that it's Gods usual way, to visit the sins of his people with rods of affliction, and this in mercy to their souls. Upon this account it was, that the rod of God was upon *David* in a long succession of troubles upon his Kingdom and family, after that great prevarication of his, 2 *Sam.* 12. 10. And if we would carefully search out the seeds and principles of those miseries under which we or ours do groan, we should find them to be our own turnings aside from the Lord, according to that *Jer.* 2. 19. and *Jer.* 4. 18. Have not all these cautions, and threatnings of the Word been exactly fulfilled by Providence in your own experience? Who can but see the infallible truth of God in all that he hath threatned? And no less evident is the truth of the Promises to all that will observe how Providence makes them good every day to us; for consider,

(3.) How great security God hath given to his people in the Promises, that no man shall lose any thing by self-denyal for his sake. He hath told us, Mark 10. 29, 30. *Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my sake, and the Gospels, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and Brethren and Sisters, and Mothers, and Children, and Lands with persecutions, and in the world to come Eternal life.*

Though that vile Apostate *Julian* derided this Promise, yet thousands and ten thousands have experienced it, and do at this day stand ready to

set their seal to it. God hath made it good to his people, not only in *spirituals*; inward joy, and peace; but even in *Temporals* also: instead of natural relations who took care for them before, hundreds of *Christians* shall stand ready to assist and help them: So that though they have left all for *Christ*, yet they may say with the *Apostle*, 2 Cor. 6. 10. *As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* O the admirable care and tenderness of Providence over those that for Conscience sake have left all, and cast themselves upon its immediate care! Are there not at this day to be found many so provided for, even to the envy of their Enemies, and their own admiration? Who sees not the faithfulness of God in the Promises, that hath but an heart to trust God in them!

The Word of Promise assures us, that whatever wants or straits the Saints fall into, their God *will never leave them, nor forsake them*, Heb. 13. 5. that he *will be with them in trouble*, Psal. 91. 15.

Consult the various Providences of your life in this point, and I doubt not, but you will find the truth of these Promises as often confirmed, as you have been in trouble. Ask your own hearts, where, or when was it that your God forsook you, and left you to sink and perish under your burdens? I doubt not, but most of you have been at one time or other plunged in difficulties, difficulties out of which you could see no way of escape by the eye of reason; yea, such, as it may be, staggered your faith in the Promise, as *David's* was, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1. when he said, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. All men are Lyars*, (even *Samuel* himself) and yet notwith-

ſtanding all, we ſee him emerge out of that Sea of trouble, and the Promiſes made good in every tittle to him. The like doubtleſs you may obſerve in your own caſes. Ask your own ſouls the queſtion, and they will ſatisfie it. Did God abandon and caſt you off in the day of your ſtraits? certainly you muſt belye your own experience, if you ſhould ſay ſo. 'Tis true, there have been ſome plunges and difficulties you have met with, wherein (1.) You could ſee no way of eſcape, but concluded you muſt periſh in them. (2.) Difficulties that have ſtaggered your faith in the Promiſes, and made you doubt, whether the fountain of All-ſufficiency would let out it ſelf for your relief. (3.) Yea, ſuch difficulties as have provoked you to murmuring and impatience, and thereby provoked the Lord to forſake you in your ſtraits; but yet you ſee he did not. He hath either (1.) Strengthened your back to bear, or (2.) Lightened your burden, or (3.) Opened an unexpected door of eſcape, according to that Promiſe, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. ſo that the evil which you feared, came not upon you.

(7.) You read, that the Word of God is the only ſupport and relief to a gracious ſoul in the dark day of Affliction, *Pſal.* 119. 50, 92.——— 2 *Sam.* 23. 5. That for this very purpoſe it was written, *Rom.* 15. 4. No rules of moral Prudence, no ſenſual remedies can perform that for us, which the Word can do.

And is not this a ſealed Truth, atteſted by a thouſand of undenyable experiences? Hence have the Saints fetcht their *Cordials*, when fainting under the rod. One Word of God can do more, than ten thouſand words of men to relieve a di-

ſtreſſed

stressed soul. If Providence have at any time directed you to such Promises, as either assure you that the Lord will be with you in trouble, *Psal.* 91. 15. or that encourage you from inward peace, to bear cheerfully outward burdens, *John* 16. 33. or satisfie you of Gods tenderness and moderation in his dealings with you, *Isa.* 27. 8. or that you shall reap blessed fruits from them, *Rom.* 8. 28. or that clear up your interest in God, and his love under your afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 7. 14. Oh, what sensible ease and relief ensues! how light is your burden, compared with what it was before!

The Word tells us, that there is no such way to improve our Estates, as to lay them out with a cheerful liberality for God; and that our withholding our hands, when God and duty calls to distribute, will not be for our advantage. See *Prov.* 11. 25. *Isa.* 32. 8. *Prov.* 19. 17. *Prov.* 11. 24. (8.

Consult Providence now, and you shall find it in all respects according to the report of the Word. O how true is the Scripture testimony herein! There are many thousand Witnesses now living, that can set their seals to both parts of this proposition. What men save (as they count saving) with one hand, Providence scatters by another hand: and what they scatter abroad with a liberal hand and single eye for God, is surely repay'd to them or theirs. Never did any man lose by distributing for God. He that lends to the poor *fœneratur Domino*, as some expound that Text, puts his money to interest to the Lord. Some have observed how Providence hath doubled all they have laid out for God, in wayes unexpected to them.

(9.) The Word assures us, that the best expedient for a man to settle his own interest in the consciences and affections of men, is to direct his wayes, so as to please the Lord, *Prov.* 16. 7. and doth not Providence confirm it? This the three Jews found by experience, *Dan.* 3. 28, 29. and so did *Daniel*, *chap.* 6. *v.* 20, 21, 22. This kept up *John*'s reputation in the conscience of *Herod*, *Mark* 6. 20. So it fell out, when *Constantius* made that exploratory decree; those that were conscientious were preferred, and those that changed their religion, expelled. Never did any man lose at last by his fidelity.

(10.) The written Word tells us, that the best expedient to inward peace and tranquillity of mind under puzzling and distracting troubles, is to commit our selves and our case to the Lord; so you read, *Psal.* 37. 5, 6, 7. and *Prov.* 16. 3.

And as you have read in the Word, so you have found it in your own Experience. Oh, what a burden is off your shoulders, when you have resigned the case to God! Then doth Providence issue your affairs comfortably for you. The difficulty is soon over, when the heart is brought to this.

Thus you see, how Scriptures are fulfilled by Providence in these few Instances I have given of it. Compare them in all other cases, and you shall find the same: for all the lines of Providence lead from the Scripture, and return thither again, and do most visibly begin and end there.

The Fourth Direction.

IN all your reviews and observations of Providence, be sure that you eye God as the Author or orderer of them all, Prov. 3. 6.

In all the *comfortable* Providences of your lives, (1.) eye God as the *Author* or donor of them. Remember he is *the father of mercies*, that begets every mercy for you, 2 Cor. 1. 3. *The God of all comfort*, without whose order no mercy or comfort can come to your hands. And think it not enough thus to acknowledge him in a general way; but when you receive mercies, take special notice of the following particulars.

(1.) Eye the Care of God for you, 1 Pet. 5. 7; *He careth for you. Your Father knows you have need of these things*, Matth. 6. 32. It is but to acquaint him what you want, and your wants are supplyed, *Phil.* 4. 6. μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, torture not your selves about it: you have a Father that cares for you.

(2.) Eye the Wisdom of God, in the way of dispensing his mercies to you, how *suitably* they are ordered to your condition, and how seasonably. When one comfort is cut off and removed, another is raised up in its room. Thus *Isaac* was comforted in *Rebecka* after his *Mothers* death, *Gen.* 24. 67.

(3.) Eye the free Grace of God in them, yea, see riches of Grace in every bequest of comfort to so vile and unworthy creatures as you are. See

your ſelves over-topt by the leaſt of all your mercies, Gen. 32. 10. *I am not worthy of the leaſt*, ſaid *Jacob*.

(4.) Eye the Condeſcenſion of God, to your requeſts for thoſe mercies, *Pſal.* 34. 6. This is the ſweeteſt bit in any enjoyment, in which a man can ſenſibly reliſh the return and anſwer of his Prayers, and greatly inflames the ſouls love to God, *Pſal.* 116. 1.

(5.) Eye the Deſign and end of God in all your comforts. Know that it is not ſent to ſatisfie the cravings of your ſenſual appetite, but to quicken and enable you for a more cheerful diſcharge of your duty, *Deut.* 28. 47.

(6.) Eye the Way and Method in which your mercies are conveyed to you. They all flow to you through the blood of *Chriſt* and *Covenant* of grace, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22, 23. Mercies derive their ſweetneſs from the Channel through which they run to us.

(7.) Eye the Diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of God, in all the comfortable enjoyments of your lives. How many thouſand better than you, are denyed thoſe Comforts? See *Heb.* 11. 37.

(8.) Eye them all as comforts appointed to refreſh you in your way to far better and greater mercies than themſelves. The beſt mercies are ſtill reſerved till laſt, and all theſe are introductive to better.

In all the Sad and Afflictive Providences that befall you, Eye God as the Author and orderer of them alſo. So he repreſents himſelf to us, Jer. 18. 11. *Behold, I create evil, and deviſe a device againſt you.* And Amos 3. 6. *Is there evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it?* More particularly,

Set

Set before you the *Soveraignty* of God. Eye him as a Being infinitely superiour to you, at whose pleasure, you, and all you have is, *Psal.* 115. 3. which is the most conclusive reason and argument of submission, *Psal.* 46. 10. For if we, and all we have, proceeded from his Will, how equal is it, that we be resigned up to it? It is not many years agone since we were not, and when it pleased him to bring us upon the Stage of action, we had no liberty of indenting with him, on what terms we would come into the world; or refuse to be, except we might have our being on such terms as we desired. His Soveraignty is gloriously displayed in his *Eternal Decrees and temporal Providences.* He might have put you into what rank of Creatures he pleased. He might have made you the most despicable Creatures, *Worms* or *Toads*: or, if men, the most vile, abject and miserable among men: and when you had run through all the miseries of this life, have damned you to Eternity, made you miserable for ever, and all this without any wrong to you. And shall not this quiet us under the common afflictions of this life? (1.)

Set the *Grace* and *Goodness* of God before you in all afflictive Providences. O see him passing by you in the cloudy and dark day, proclaiming his Name, *the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious.* There are two sorts of mercies that are seldom eclipsed by the darkest affliction that befalls the Saints in their temporal concerns, *sc. sparing mercy* in this world, and *saving mercy* in that to come. It is not so bad now as it might, and we deserved it should be, and it will be better hereafter. This the Church observed, and reasoned (2.)

her self quiet from it, *Lam.* 3. 22. Hath he taken some? he might have taken all. Are we afflicted? it's mercy we are not destroyed. Oh if we consider what temporal mercies are yet spared, and what spiritual mercies are bestowed, and yet continued to us, we shall find cause to admire mercy, rather than complain of severity.

Eye the Wisdom of God in all your afflictions, behold it in the choice of the *kind* of your affliction, this, and not another: the *Time*, now and not at another season: the *Degree*, in this measure only, and not in a greater: the *Supports* afforded you under it, not left altogether helpless: the *Issue* to which it's over-ruled, it's made to your good, not ruine. Look upon all these, and then ask thy heart that question God asked *Jonah*, *Dost thou well to be angry?* Surely, when you consider all, what need you had of these rods, that your corruptions will require all this, it may be much more to mortifie them; that without the perishing of these things, you might have perished for ever; you will see great reasons to be quiet and well satisfied under the hand of God.

Set the *faithfulness* of the Lord before you under the saddest Providences. So did *David*, *Psal.* 119. 75. This is according to his Covenant faithfulness, *Psal.* 89. 32. Hence it is, that the Lord will not withhold a rod when need requires it, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6. Nor will he forsake his people under the rod, when he inflicts it, 2 *Cor.* 4. 9.

Oh what quietness will this breed! I see my God will not lose my heart, if a rod can prevent it; he had rather hear me groan here, than howl hereafter: his love is judicious, not

fond:

fond: he consults my *good*, rather than my *ease*.

Eye the *All-sufficiency* of God in the day of affliction. See enough in him still, whatever be gone. Here is the *fountain* still as full as ever, though this or that *pipe* be cut off, which was wont to convey somewhat of it to me. O Christians, can't you make up any loss this way? Can't you see more in God, than in any or all the Creature comforts you have lost? With what eyes then do you look upon God? (5.)

Lastly, Eye the *Immutability* of God. Look on him as the Rock of Ages, James 1. 17. *The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.* Eye *Jesus Christ*, as *the same yesterday, to day and for ever.* Oh how quietly will you then behave your selves under the changes of Providence? It may be, two or three dayes have made a sad change in your condition: the death of a dear relation hath turned all things upside down: that place is empty where lately they were, as it is, Job 7. 10. *His place shall know him no more:* Well, but God is what he was, and where he was: Time shall make no change upon him, as it is in Isa. 40. 6, 7, 8. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.* O how composing are those views of God to our spirits under dark Provi- (6.)

The Fifth Direction.

LAstly, *Work up your hearts to those frames, and exercise those affections which the several Providences of God that are versant about you call for*, Eccles. 7. 14. Suit your selves to answer the design and end of God in all Providences. As there are various affections planted in your souls, so are there several graces planted in those affections, and several Providences appointed to draw forth, and exercise these graces.

(1.) When the Providences of God are sad, and afflictive either upon the *Church* in general, or your families and persons in particular, *then it is seasonable for you to exercise godly sorrow and humility of spirit*: for in that day, and by those Providences God doth call to it, *Isa.* 22. 12. *Micah* 6. 9. Now, sensitive pleasure and natural joy, is out of season, Ezek. 21. 10. *Should we then make mirth?* If there be either (1.) A filial spirit in us, we cannot be light and vain, when our *Father* is angry; or (2.) If any real sense of the evil of sin which provokes Gods anger, we must be heavy hearted when God is smiting for it; or (3.) If any sense and compassion for the miseries that sin brings upon the world, it will make us to say with *David*, Psal. 119. 158. *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.* 'Tis sad to consider the miseries that they pull down upon themselves in this world and that to come. (4.) If there be any care in

in us to prevent utter ruine, and ſtop God in the way of his anger, we know this is the means to do it, *Amos* 4. 12.

(2.) *HOw ſad and diſmal ſoever the face of Providence be, yet ſtill maintain ſpiritual joy and comfort in God under all. Though there be no herd in the ſtall* (ſaid *Habakuck*, chap. 3. 17.) *yet will I rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.*

There are two ſorts of Comforts, *Natural* and *Senſitive*, *Divine* and *Spiritual*. There is a time when it becomes *Chriſtians* to exerciſe both; ſo *Heſ.* 9. 22. And there is a time when the former is to be ſuſpended and laid by, *Pſal.* 137. 2. But there is no ſeaſon, wherein ſpiritual joy and comfort in God is unſeaſonable, as appears by thoſe Scriptures, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 16. *Phil.* 4. 4. This ſpiritual joy or comfort, is nothing elſe but the cheerineſs of our heart in God, and the ſenſe of our intereſt in him, and in his Promiſes. And it's ſure, that no Providence can render this unſeaſonable to a Chriſtian. Let us ſuppoſe the moſt afflicted and calamitous ſtate a Chriſtian can be incident to, yet,

(1.) Why ſhould ſad Providences make him lay by his comforts in God? when as thoſe are but for a moment, but theſe eternal, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17.

(2.) Why ſhould we lay by our joy in God, upon the account of ſad Providences without, when at the very worſt and loweſt ebb, the Saints have infinitely more cauſe to rejoyce, than to be caſt down? There's more in one of their

mercies

mercies to comfort them, than in all their troubles to deject them. All your losses are but as the loss of a *farthing* to a *Prince*, *Rom.* 8. 18.

(3.) Why should they be sad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? As *Christ* said, Matth. 9. 15. *Can the Children of the Bridegroom be sad, whilest the Bridegroom is with them?* So say I, Can the soul be sad, whilest God is with it? Oh methinks, that one Promise, Psal. 91. 15. *I will be with him in trouble*, should bear you up under all burdens. Let them be cast down, that have no God in trouble to turn to.

(4.) Why should they be sad, as long as no outward dispensation of Providence, (be it never so sad) can be interpreted as a mark or sign of Gods hatred or Anger, Eccl. 9. 2, 3. *There is one event to the righteous and wicked.* Indeed, if it were a signification of the Lords wrath against a man, it would justifie our dejection; but this cannot be so: his heart is full of love, whilest the face of Providence is full of frowns.

(5.) Why should we be cast down under sad Providences, whilst we have so great security, that even by the hands of these Providences God will do us good, and all these things shall *turn to our salvation?* Rom. 8. 28. By these God is but killing your lusts, weaning your hearts from a vain world, preventing temptations, and exciting your desires after heaven; this is all the hurt they shall do you, and shall that sadden us?

(6.) Why should we lay by our joy in God, when as the change of our condition is so nigh? It's but a little while, and sorrows shall flee away: you shall never suffer more: *God will wipe away all tears*, Revel. 7. 17. Well then, you see there

no reason upon the account of Providence, to give up your joy and comfort in God. But if you will maintain it under all Providences, then be careful

(1.) To Clear up your Interest in, and Title to God. *Faith* may be separated from comfort, but assurance cannot.

(2.) Mortifie your inordinate affections to earthly things. This makes Providences that deprive and cross us so heavy. Mortifie your opinion and affection, and you'l sensibly lighten your affliction. It is strong affection that makes strong affliction.

(3.) Dwell much upon the meditation of the Lords near approach; and then all these things will seem but trifles to you. *Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.*

EXercise *heavenly mindedness, and keep your hearts upon things eternal, under all the Providences with which the Lord exercises you in this world*, Gen. 6. 9. *Noah* walked with God, yet met with as sad Providences in his day, as any man that ever lived since his time. But alas! we find most Providences, rather *stops*, than *steps* in our walk with God. If we be under comfortable Providences, how sensual, wanton and worldly do our hearts grow! And if sad Providences befall us, how dedolent or distracted are we! And this comes to pass partly through the *narrowness*, but mostly, through the *deceitfulness* of our spirits. Our hearts are narrow, and know not how to manage two businesses of such different natures, as Earthly and Heavenly matters (3.)

are without detriment to one. *Pectora nostra duas curas non admittunt.* But certainly such a fraime of spirit is attainable that will enable us to keep on in an even and steddy course with God, whatever befall us. Others have attained it, and why not we? Prosperous Providences are for the most part a dangerous state to the soul. The *Moon* never suffers an *Eclipse*, but at full; yet *Jehoshaphat*'s grace suffered no *Eclipse* from the fulness of his outward condition, who *had riches in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the ways of Gods commandments*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. *David*'s life was as full of cares, turmoils and incumbrances, as most men we read of; yet how spiritual the temper of his heart was, that excellent *Book of Psalms*, (which was mostly composed amidst those distractions) will acquaint us. The *Apostles* were cast into as great necessities, and suffered as hard things, as ever men did; yet how raised and heavenly their spirits were amidst all, who sees not? And certainly, if it were not possible to maintain heavenly-mindedness in such a state and posture of affairs, God would never exercise any of his people with such Providences: he would never give you so much of the world to lose your hearts in the love of it, or so little to distract you with the cares of it. If therefore we were more deeply sanctified, and the tendencies of our hearts heaven-ward more ardent and vigorous; If we were more mortified to Earthly things, and could not but keep our due distance from them; our outward conditions would not at this rate draw forth and exercise our inward corruptions, nor would we hazard the loss of so sweet an enjoyment as our fellowship with God

is, for the sake of any concernment our bodies have on Earth.

(4.) *UNder all Providences maintain a contented heart with what the Lord allots you, be it more or less of the things of this world.* This grace must run parallel with all Providences. *Learn how to be full, and how to suffer want, and in every state to be content*, Phil. 4. 12.

In this duty all men are concerned at all times, and in every state, not only the people of God, but even the unregenerate also. I will therefore address some considerations proper to both. And first to the unregenerate, to stop their mouths from repining, and charging God foolishly, when Providence crosses them. Let them seriously consider these four things.

(1.) That Hell and Eternal damnation are the portion of their cup, according to the tenour of Law, and Gospel threatnings. Whatsoever therefore is short of this is to be admired as the fruit of Gods stupendious patience, and forbearance towards them. Ah poor souls! Know you not, that you are men and women condemned to wrath by the plain sentence of the Law? *Mark* 16. 16. *John* 3. 36. 2 *Thess.* 1. 6, 7. And if so, sure there are other matters to exercise your thoughts, desires, fears and cares about than these. Alas! if you cannot bear a frown of Providence, a light cross in these things, how will you bear the everlasting burnings! A man that is to lose his head to morrow, is not very solicitous what bed he lyes on, or how his Table is furnisht the night before.

(2.) Consid-

(2.) Conſider, though you be condemned perſons, and have no promiſe to entitle you to any mercy; yet there are very many mercies in your poſſeſſion at this day. Be your condition as afflictive as it will, is life nothing? eſpecially conſidering whither you muſt ſink, when that thread is cut. Are the neceſſary ſupports of life nothing? Doth not Providence miniſter to you theſe things, though you daily diſoblige it, and provoke God to ſend you to your own place? But, above all, is the *Goſpel* and precious means of ſalvation nothing, by which you yet are in a capacity of eſcaping the damnation of Hell? O what would the damned ſay, if they were but put into your condition once more? What, and yet fret againſt God, becauſe every thing elſe ſuits not your deſires?

(3.) Conſider, that if ever you be reſcued out of that miſerable condition you are in, ſuch croſs Providences, as theſe you complain of, are the moſt probable means to do it. Alas! proſperity and ſucceſs is not the way to ſave, but deſtroy you, *Prov.* 1. 32. You muſt be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, if ever your ear be opened to inſtruction, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. Wo to you, if you go on ſmoothly in the way in which you are, and meet with no croſſes.

(4.) Laſtly, Conſider, all your troubles under which you complain, are pulled down upon your heads by your own ſins. You turn Gods mercies into ſin, and then fret againſt God, becauſe it turns your ſins into ſorrow. Your wayes and doings procure theſe things to you. Lay your hand therefore upon your mouth and ſay, *Wherefore doth the living man complain, a man for the puniſh-*

ment of his ſin, Lam. 3. 39. But I muſt turn to the Lords people, who have leaſt pretences of all men to be diſſatisfied with any of Gods Providences, and yet are but too frequently found in that temper. And to them I ſhall offer the following conſiderations.

(1.) *Conſider your ſpiritual mercies and priviledges with which the Lord Jeſus hath inveſted you, and repine at your Lot of Providence if you can.* One of theſe mercies alone, hath enough in it to ſweeten all your troubles in this world. When the Apoſtle conſidered them, his heart was overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment; ſo that he could not forbear in the midſt of all his outward troubles to cry out, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath abounded to us in all ſpiritual bleſſings,* &c. Eph. 1. 3. Oh, who that ſees ſuch an Inheritance ſetled upon him in *Chriſt*, can ever open his mouth more to repine at his Lot of Providence!

(2.) *Conſider your ſins, and that will make you contented with your Lot.* Yea, conſider two things in ſin. (1.) What it deſerves from God, and (2.) What it requires to mortifie and purge it in you. It deſerves from God Eternal ruine: the merit of Hell is in the leaſt vain thought. Every ſin forfeits all the mercies you have; and if ſo, rather wonder your mercies are ſo many, than that you have no more. Beſides, you cannot doubt, but your corruptions require all the croſſes, wants and troubles that are upon you, and it may be, a great deal more, to mortifie and ſubdue them. Don't you find, after all the rods that have been upon you, a proud heart ſtill, a vain and earthly heart ſtill? Oh how many bitter

potions are but necessary to purge out this tough malignant humour!

(3.) *Consider how near you are to the Change of your condition:* have but a little patience, and all will be as well with you as your hearts can desire. It is no small comfort to the Saints, that this world is the worst place that ever they shall be in: things will better every day with them. If the *Traveller* have spent all his money, yet it doth not much trouble him, if he know himself within a few miles of his own home. If there be no *Candles* in the house, we do not much matter it, if we are sure it's almost break of day; for then there will be no use for them. This is your case; *your Salvation is nearer than when you believed,* Rom. 13. 11.

I have done with the directive part of this discourse; but before I pass to this fifth Head, I judge it necessary to leave a few Cautions to prevent the abuse of Providence, and your miscarriages in your behaviour towards it. And

First Caution.

If Providence delay the performance of any mercy to you, that you have long waited and prayed for, yet see, that you despond not; nor grow weary of waiting upon God for that reason. It pleases the Lord oftentimes to try, and exercise his people this way, and make them cry, *How long Lord, how long?* Psal. 13. 1, 2.

These delayes both upon spiritual and temporal accounts are frequent, and when they befall us, we are too apt to interpret them as denyals, and fall into a sinful despondency of mind, though

ther

there be no cause at all for it, *Psal.* 31. 12. *Lam.* 3. 8. 44. It is not alwayes that the returns of prayer are dispatcht to us in the same hour they are asked of God; yet sometimes it falls out so, *Isa.* 65. 24. *Dan.* 9. 23. But though the Lord means to perform to us the mercies we desire; yet he will ordinarily exercise our patience to wait for them; and that for these reasons.

(1) Because *our* time is not the *proper* season for us to receive our mercies in. Now the *season* of mercy is a very great circumstance that adds much to the value of it. God judges not as we do; we are all in haste, and will have it now, Numb. 12. 13. *But he is a God of judgement, and blessed are they that wait for him*, Isa. 30. 18.

(2.) Afflictive Providences have not accomplished that design upon our hearts they were sent for, when we are so earnest and impatient for a change of them; and till then the rod must not be taken off, *Isa.* 10. 12.

(3.) The more prayers and searchings of heart come between our wants and supplies, our afflictions and reliefs, the sweeter are our reliefs and supplies thereby made to us, Isa. 25. 9. *This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will rejoyce and be glad in his salvation.* This recompenses the delay, and payes us for all the expences of our patience.

But though there be such weighty reasons for the stop and delay of refreshing comfortable Providences; yet we cannot bear it, our hands hang down and we faint, Psal. 69. 3. *I am weary of my crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.* For alas! we judge by sense and ap-

pearance, and consider not, that Gods *heart* may be *towards us*, whilst the *hand* of his Providence seems to be *against us*. If things continue at one rate with us, we think our prayers are lost, and our hopes perished from the Lord: much more when things grow worse and worse, and our darkness and trouble encreases, as usually it doth just before the break of day and change of our condition, then we conclude, God is angry with our prayers. See *Gideon*'s reply, *Judges* 6. 13. This even staggered a *Moses*'s faith, Exod. 5. 22, 23. O what groundless Jealousies and suspicions of God are found at such times in the hearts of his own Children! *Job* 9. 16, 17. *Psal.* 77. 7, 8, 9.

But this is our great evil, and to prevent it in future tryals, I will offer a few proper considerations in the case.

1.) The delay of your mercies, is really for your advantage. You read Isa. 30. 18. *The Lord waits that he may be gracious.* What is that? Why, it's nothing else but the time of his preparation of mercies for you, and your hearts for mercy, that so you may have it with the greatest advantage of comfort. The foolish Child would pluck the apple while it's green; but when it's ripe, it drops of its own accord, and is more pleasant and wholsome.

2.) It's a greater mercy, to have an heart willing to refer all to God, and be at his dispose; than to enjoy presently the mercy we are most eager and impatient for. In that God pleases *you*, in this you please *God*. A mercy may be given you as the fruit of common Providence; but such a temper of heart is the fruit of special grace.

So

So much as the glorifying of God is better than the content and pleasure of the creature, so much is such a frame better, than such a fruition.

Expected mercies are never nearer, than when the hearts and hopes of Gods people are lowest. Thus in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and *Babylon*, Ezek. 37. 11. So we have found it in our own personal concerns: *at Evening time it shall be light*, Zach. 14. 7. When we look for increasing darkness, light arises. (3.

Our unfitness for mercy, is the reason why they are delayed so long. We put the blocks into the way of mercy, and then repine, that they make no more haste to us, Isa. 59. 1, 2. *The Lords hand is not shortned, but our iniquities have separated betwixt him and us.* (4.

Consider, the mercies you wait for, are the fruits of pure grace, you deserve them not, nor can claim them upon any Title of desert; and therefore have reason to wait for them in a patient and thankful frame. (5.

Consider, how many *Millions* of men as good as you by nature, are cut off from all hope and expectation of mercy for ever, and there remains to them nothing but *a fearful expectation of wrath.* This might have been your case; and therefore be not of an impatient spirit under the expectations of mercy. (6.

Pry not too curiously into the Secrets of Providence, nor suffer your shallow reason arrogantly to judge and censure its decrees.

There be hard Texts in the *Works*, as well as in the *Word* of God. It becomes us modestly and humbly to *reverence*, but not to *dogmatize* too boldly and positively upon them: a man may easily get a strain by over-reaching. *When I thought to know this* (saith *Asaph*) *it was too wonderful for me.* I thought to know this, there was the arrogant attempt of reason, there he pryed into the *Arcana* of Providence, but it was too wonderful for me, it was *labor inutilis*, as *Calvin* expounds it. He pryed so far into that puzzling Mysterie of the *Afflictions* of the *Righteous*, and *Prosperity* of the *wicked*, till it begat *envy* towards *them*, and *despondency* in *himself*, Psal. 73. v. 3. 13. and this was all he got by summoning Providence to the bar of reason. Holy *Job* was guilty of this evil, and ingenuously ashamed of it, *Job* 42. 3.

I know, there is nothing in the Word or in the Works of God, that is repugnant to sound reason: but there are some things in both, which are opposite to carnal reason; as well as above right reason; and therefore our reason never shews it self more unreasonable, than in summoning those things to its bar, which transcend its sphere and capacity. Manifold are the mischiefs which ensue upon this practice.

By this we are drawn into an unworthy suspi- (1.)
cion and distrust of the faithfulness of God in the Promises. *Sarah* laught at the tydings of the Son of Promise, because reason contradicted, and told her, it was naturally impossible, *Gen.* 18. 12, 14.

Hence comes despondency of mind, and faint- (2.)
ness of heart under afflictive Providences; reason can discern no good fruits in them, nor deliverance from them, and so our hands hang down in a sinful discouragement, saying, all these things are against us, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1.

Hence flow temptations to deliver our selves (3.)
by indirect and sinful mediums, *Isa.* 30. 15, 16. When our own reason fills us with a distrust of Providence, it naturally prompts us to sinful shifts, and there leaves us entangled in the snares of our own making.

Beware therefore you lean not too much to your own reasons and understandings. Nothing is more plausible, nothing more dangerous. In other matters it is appointed the Arbiter and Judge, we make it so here, and therefore we are so diffident and distrustful notwithstanding the fullest security of the Promises, whilest our reason stands by unsatisfied.

The Fifth Head.

HAving given direction for the due management of this great and important duty, what remains, but that we now set our hearts to it, and make it the constant work of every day throughout our lives? O what peace, what pleasure, what stability, what holy courage and confidence would result from such an observation of Providence as hath been directed to! But alas! we may say with reference to the voices of Divine Providence, as it is Job 33. 14. *God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.* Many a time Providence hath spoken *Instruction* in duty, *Conviction* for iniquity, *Encouragement* under despondency; but we regard it not. How greatly are we all wanting to our duty, and comfort by this neglect! It will be but needful therefore to spread before you, the loveliness and excellency of walking with God in a due and daily observation of his Providences, that our souls may be fully engaged to it.

First

First Motive.

AND First, Let me offer this, as a moving argument to all gracious souls; *That by this means you may maintain sweet and sensible communion with God from day to day.* And what is there desirable in this world, in comparison therewith! *Thou Lord hast made me glad through thy works: I will triumph in the works of thy hands,* Psal. 92. 4. Your hearts may be as sweetly and sensibly refresht by the works of Gods hands, as by the words of his mouth. *Psal.* 104. *per totum* is spent in the consideration of the works of Providence; which so filled the *Psalmist's* heart, that, by way of ejaculation, he expresses the effect of it; Ver. 34. *My Meditation of him shall be sweet.*

Communion with God properly and strictly taken, consists in two things; *viz.* Gods manifestation of himself to the soul, and the souls answerable returns to God. This is that *sweet* fellowship we have here with God. Now God manifests himself to his people by Providences as well as Ordinances; neither is there any grace in a sanctified soul hid from the gracious influences of his Providential manifestations. Sometimes the Lord manifests his displeasure and anger against the sins of his people in correcting and rebuking Providences. His rods have a chiding voice, Micah 6. 9. *Hear the rod and who hath appointed it.* This discovery of Gods anger kindly melts and thaws a gracious soul, and produces a double sweet effect upon it, namely, *repentance* for sins past, and due *caution* against future sins.

(1.) It thaws and melts the heart for ſins committed. Thus *David*'s heart was melted for his ſin, when the hand of God was heavy upon him in affliction, *Pſal.* 32. 4, 5. Thus the *Captive Church*, upon whom fell the ſaddeſt and moſt diſmal Providence that ever befell any of Gods people in any age of the world; ſee how their hearts are broken for ſin under this ſevere rebuke, *Lam.* 2. 17, 18, 19. And then, (2.) For caution againſt ſin for the time to come; it's plain, that the rebukes of Providence leave that effect alſo upon gracious hearts, *Ezra* 9. 13, 14. *Pſal.* 85. 8.

Sometimes he cheers and comforts the hearts of his people with ſmiling and reviving Providences, both publick and perſonal. There are times of lifting up as well as caſting down by the hand of Providence. The Scene changes, the aſpects of Providence are very cheerful and encouraging: their Winter ſeems to be over: they put off their garments of mourning; and then, Ah, what ſweet returns are made to heaven by gracious ſouls! Doth God lift them up by proſperity? they alſo will lift up their God by praiſes. See *Pſal.* 18. *Title*, and *v.* 1, 2, 3. So *Moſes* and the people with him, *Exod.* 15. when God had delivered them from *Pharaoh*, how do they exalt him in a ſong of thankſgiving, which for the elegancy and ſpirituality of it, is made an Emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the Saints! *Rev.* 15. 3.

Upon the whole, whatever effects our Communion with God in any of his Ordinances doth uſe to produce upon our hearts, the ſame we may obſerve to follow our converſing with him in his Providences. For,

It is usually found in the experience of all the (1.)
saints, that in what Ordinance or duty soever they have any sensible communion with God, it naturally produces in their spirits a deep abasement and humiliation from the sense of divine condescensions to such vile poor Worms as we are. Thus *Abraham*, Gen. 18. 27. *I am but dust and ashes.* The same effect follows our converse with God in his Providences. Thus when God had in the way of his Providence prospered *Jacob*, how doth he lay himself at the feet of God, as a man overwhelmed with the sense of mercy! See Gen. 32. 5, 10. *And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now am become two bands.* Thus also it was with *David*, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *Who am I, and what is my Fathers house, that thou hast brought me hitherto!* And I doubt not, but some of you have found the like frame of heart upon you, that these holy men here expressed. Can you not remember when God lifted you up by Providence, how you cast down your selves before him, and have been viler in your own eyes than ever! Why, thus do all gracious hearts; What am I, that the Lord should do thus and thus for me! O that ever so great and holy a God should thus be concerned for so vile and sinful a Worm!

(2.) Doth Communion with God in Ordinances, (2.)
melt the heart into love to God? *Cant.* 2. 3, 4, 5. Why, so doth the observation of his Providences also. Never did any man converse with Gods works of Providence aright, but found his heart at some times melted into love to the God of his

mercies, *Psal.* 18, 1. compared with the Title. When God had delivered him from the hand of *Saul*, and all his Enemies, he said, *I will love thee O Lord my strength.* Every man loves the mercies of God, but a Saint loves the God of his mercies. The mercies of God, as they are the fewel of a wicked mans lusts, so they are fewel to maintain a good mans love to God; not that their love to God is grounded upon these external benefits. Not thine, but thee, O Lord, is the *motto* of a gracious soul; but yet these things serve to blow up the flame of love to God in their hearts, and they find it so.

(4.) Doth Communion with God set the keenest edge upon the soul against sin? You see it doth: and have a pregnant Instance of it in *Moses*, when he had been with God in the *Mount* for forty dayes, and had there enjoyed communion with him; when he came down and saw the *Calf* the people had made; see what an holy *paroxysm* of zeal and anger it cast his soul into, *Exod.* 32. 19, 20. Why, the same effect you may discern to follow the Saints converse with God in his Providences. What was that which pierced the heart of *David* with such a deep sense of the evil of his sin, which is so abundantly manifested in *Psalm* 51. throughout? Why, if you look into the Title you shall find, it was the effect of what *Nathan* had laid before him: and if you consult *2 Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9, 10. you shall find, it was the goodness of God manifested to him in the several endearing Providences of his life, which in this he had so evilly requited the Lord for, that broke his heart to pieces in the sense of it: and I doubt not, but some of us have some-

times found the like effects, by comparing Gods wayes and our own together.

Doth Communion with the Lord enlarge the heart for obedience and service? Surely it is as oyl to the wheels, that makes them run on freely and nimbly their course. Thus when *Isaiah* had obtained a special manifestation of God, and the Lord askt, *Whom shall I send?* he presents a ready soul for the employment, Isa. 6. 8. *Here am I, Lord, send me.* Why, the very same effect follows sanctified Providences, as you may see in *Jehoshaphat*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. and in *David*, Psal. 116. 12. O when a soul considers what God hath done for him, he cannot chuse but say, what shall I return? how shall I answer these engagements? (4.)

And thus you see, what sweet Communion a soul may have with God in the way of his Providences. O that you would thus walk with him! How much of Heaven might be found on Earth this way! And certainly, it will never repent the Lord he hath done you good, when his mercies produce such effects upon your hearts: he will say of every favour thus improved, It was well bestowed, and will rejoyce over you to do you good for ever.

Second.

Second Motive.

A *Great part of the pleasure and delight of the Christian life is made out of the observation of Providence.* It is said, Psal. 111. 2. *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein:* (*i. e.*) the study of Providence is so sweet and pleasant, that it invites and allures the soul to search and dive into it. How pleasant is it to a well tempered soul to behold and observe,

(1.) The sweet harmony and consent of divine Attributes in the issues of Providence! They may seem sometimes to jarr and clash, to part with each other, and go contrary wayes: but they only seem so to do; for in the winding up, they alwayes meet and embrace each other, Psal. 85. 10. *Mercy and Truth have met together: Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.* It is spoken with an immediate reference to that signal Providence of *Israels* deliverance out of the *Babylonish* captivity, and the sweet effects thereof: wherein the truth and righteousness of God in the promises, did as it were kiss and embrace the mercy and peace that was contained in the performance of them, after they had seemed for seventy years to be at a great distance from each other. For it is an allusion to the usual demonstrations of joy and gladness, that two dear friends are wont to give and receive, after a long absence and separation from each other: they no sooner

sooner meet, but they smile, embrace and kiss each other. Even thus it is here. The word וּנְשָׁקוּ may be, (and by some is) rendered, *have met us*, and that also is true; for when ever these blessed Promises and Performances meet and kiss each other, they are also joyfully embraced and kissed by believing souls. There is, I doubt not, a mediate reference of this Scripture to the *Messiah* also, and our redemption by him: In him it is that these divine Attributes which before seemed to clash and contradict one another in the business of our salvation, have a sweet agreement and accomplishment. Truth and Righteousness do in him meet with Mercy and Peace in a blessed agreement. What a lovely sight is this! and how pleasant to behold! O if with *Habbakuk*, *chap. 2. v. 3.* we would but stand upon our Watch-Tower to take due observations of Providence; what rare prospects might we have! *Luther* understands it of the Word of God, *q. d.* I will look into the Word, and observe there how God accomplisheth all things, and brings them to pass, and how his works are the fulfilling of his Word. Others (as *Calvin*) understand it of a mans own retiring thoughts and meditations, wherein a man carefully observes what purposes and designs God hath upon the World in general, or upon himself in particular, and how the Truth and Righteousness of God in the Word work themselves through all difficulties and impediments, and meet in the mercy, peace and happiness of the Saints at last. Every Believer (take it in which sense you will,) hath his *Watch-Tower* as well as *Habbakuk*: and give me leave to say, it's an *Angelical employment* to stand upon

Occurrunt nobis, Syriac.

upon it, and behold the consent of Gods Attributes, the accomplishment of his Ends, and our own happiness in the works of Providence. For this is the very joy of the Angels and Saints in Heaven, to see Gods Ends wrought out, and his Attributes glorified in the mercy and peace of the Church, *Rev.* 14. 1, 2, 3. & 8.

(2.) And as it's a pleasant sight to see the harmony of Gods Attributes, so it is exceeding pleasant to behold the resurrection of our own prayers and hopes as from the dead. Why, this you may often see, if you will duly observe the works of Providence towards you. We hope and pray for such and such mercies to the Church, or to our selves; but God delayes the accomplishment of our hopes, suspends the answer of our prayers, and seems to speak to us, as Hab. 2. 3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry:* but we have no patience to wait the time of the Promise, our hopes languish and dye in the interim; and we say with the despondent Church, Lam. 3. 18. *Our hope is perished from the Lord*; but Oh, how sweet and comfortable is it, to see these prayers fulfilled, after we have given up all expectation of them! May we not say of them, as the Scripture speaks of the restoration of the Jews, it is even *life from the dead.* This was *David*'s case, *Psal.* 31. 22. he gave up his hopes and prayers for lost, yet lived to see the comfortable and unexpected returns of them. And this was the case of *Job*, *chap.* 6. 11. he had given up all expectation of better dayes, and yet this man lived to see a resurrection of all his lost

comforts

comforts with an advantage. Think how that change and unexpected turn of Providence affected his soul: it is with our hopes and prayers as with our *Alms*, *Cast thy bread on the waters, for thou shalt find it after many dayes*, Eccles. 11. 1. or as it was with *Jacob*, who had given over all hopes of ever seeing his beloved *Joseph* again, but when a strange and unexpected Providence had restored that hopeless mercy to him again, Oh how ravishing and transporting was it? *Gen.* 46. 29, 30.

(3.) What a transporting pleasure is it, to behold great blessings and advantages to us wrought by Providence, out of those very things that seemed to threaten our ruine or misery? and yet by due observing the wayes of Providence, you may to your singular comfort find it so. Little did *Joseph* think his transportation into *Egypt*, had been in order to his advancement there; yet he lived with joy to see it, and with a thankful heart to acknowledge it, *Gen.* 45. 5. Wait and observe, and you shall assuredly find that Promise, *Rom.* 8. 28. working out its way through all Providences. How many times have you been made to say as *David*, Psal. 119. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* O what a difference have we seen betwixt our afflictions at our first meeting with them, and our parting from them! We have entertained them with sighs and tears, but parted from them with joy, blessing God for them, as the happy Instruments of our good. Thus our fears and sorrows are turned into praises and songs of thanksgiving.

(4.) What unspeakable comfort is it for a poor soul, that sees nothing but sin and vileness in

it ſelf, at the ſame time to ſee what an high eſteem and value the great God hath for him! This may be diſcerned by a due attendance to Providence, for there a man ſees *goodneſs and mercy following* him through all his dayes, as it is *Pſal.* 23. 6. Other men proſecute good, and it flyes from them, they can never overtake it; but goodneſs and mercy follow the people of God, and they cannot avoid or eſcape it: it gives them chaſe day by day, and finds them out; even when they ſometimes put themſelves by ſin out of the way of it. In all the Providences that befall them, goodneſs and mercy purſues them. O with what a melting heart do they ſometimes reflect upon theſe things! *and will not the goodneſs of God be diſcouraged from following me, notwithſtanding all my vile affronts and abuſes of it in former mercies? Lord, what am I, that mercy ſhould thus purſue me, when vengeance and wrath purſue others as good by nature as I am?* It certainly argues the great eſteem God hath of a man, when he thus follows him with ſanctified Providences (whether they be comforts or croſſes) for his good. And ſo much is plain, from Job 7. 18. *Lord what is man, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Certainly, Gods people are his treaſure; and by this it appears that they are ſo, that he withdraws not his eye from them, *Job* 36. 7. I ſay not, that Gods favour and reſpect to a man, may be concluded ſingly from his Providences; but ſanctified Providences may very much clear it to us: and when it doth ſo, it cannot but be matter of exceeding great joy.

(5.) To conclude, what is there in all this world

world, that can give a ſoul ſuch joy and comfort, as to find himſelf by every thing ſet on and farthered in his way to Heaven! And yet this may be diſcerned, by an heedful attendance to the effects and iſſues of Providences.

How croſs ſoever the Winds and Tides of Providence at any time ſeem to us, yet nothing is more certain, than that they all conſpire to haſten ſanctified ſouls to God, and fit them for glory.

St. *Paul* knew, that both his bonds and the afflictions added to them ſhould turn to, or (as the word ἀποβήσεται imports) finally iſſue in his ſalvation, *Phil.* 1. 19. Not that in themſelves they ſerve to any ſuch purpoſe; but as they are over-ruled and determined to ſuch an end, *through Prayer, and the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.* When *Prayer* the external, and the *Spirit* the internal means are joyned with them; then Afflictions themſelves become excellent means to promote ſalvation. And have we not with joy obſerved, how thoſe very things, that ſenſe and reaſon tell us are oppoſite to our happineſs, have been the moſt bleſſed Inſtruments to promote it? How hath God bleſſed *Croſſes* to mortifie *corruption*, *wants* to kill our *wantonneſs*, *diſappointments* to wean us from the *world*! O we little think, how comfortable thoſe things will be in the review, which are ſo burdenſome to preſent ſenſe!

The Third Motive.

IN the next place, I beſeech you conſider, *What an effectual means the due obſervation of Providence will be to over-power and ſuppreſs the natural Atheiſm that is in your hearts.*

There is a natural ſeed of Atheiſm in the beſt hearts, and this is very much nouriſhed, by paſſing a raſh and falſe judgement upon the works of Providence. When we ſee wicked ones to proſper in the world, and godly men cruſhed and deſtroyed in the way of righteouſneſs and integrity; it may tempt us to think, there is no advantage by religion, and all our ſelf-denyal and holineſs, to be little better than loſt labour. Thus ſtood the caſe with good *Aſaph*, Pſal. 73. 12, 13. *Behold, theſe are the ungodly that proſper in the world, they increaſe in riches*: and what doth the fleſh inſer from thence? Why no leſs than the unprofitableneſs of the wayes of holineſs, *Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.* This irreligious Inference carnal reaſon was ready to draw from the diſpenſations of outward proſperity to wicked men; but now if we would heedfully obſerve, either the ſignal retributions of Providence to *many* of them in *this world*, or to *all* of them in the *world to come*; O what a full confirmation is this to our faith! Pſal. 9. 16. *The Lord is known by the Judgements that he executeth.* The fifty eighth *Pſalm* contains the Characters of the moſt prodigious ſinners, whoſe wickedneſs is aggravated,

By

By the deliberation with which it's committed, *V.* 2.
By their habit and custom in it, *V.* 3.
By their incorrigibleness and persistence in it, *V.* 4, 5.

And the Providence of God is there invited

To destroy their power, *V.* 6. and that either
By a gradual and insensible consumption of them, *V.* 7, 8. or,
By a suddain and unexpected stroke, *V.* 9.

And what shall the effects of such Providences be to the Righteous? Why, it shall be matter of joy, *V.* 10. And great confirmation to their faith in God, V. 11. *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

And on the contrary, how convincingly clear are those Providences, that demonstrate the Being, Wisdom, Power, Love and Faithfulness of God, in the supporting, preserving and delivering of the Righteous, in all their dangers, fears and difficulties? In these things the Lord shews himself to his people, *Psal.* 94. 1. Yea, he shews himself to spiritual eyes in these Providences, as clearly, as the Sun manifests himself by his own beams of light, Hab. 3. 3, 4. *His brightness was as the light, and he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power.* It's spoken of the Lords going forth for his people in their deliverance from their Enemies: and then he had horns or rayes and beams of power and mercy coming out of his hands, &c.

hands, are meant his Providential administrations and dispensations, and the horns that came out of them, are nothing else but the glorious display of his Attributes in those Providences. How did God make himself known to his people in that signal deliverance of them out of *Egypt*? See *Exod.* 6. 3. then he was known to them by his name *Jehovah*, in giving being by his Providences to the mercies promised.

Thus when *Christ* shall give his people the last and greatest deliverance from *Antichrist*, he shall shew himself to his people in a vesture dipt in blood, and his Name shall be called, *The Word of God*, Rev. 19. 13. His Name was the Word of God before; but then he was the Word *revealing* and discovering the promises and truths of God; now *accomplishing* and fulfilling them. That his Name is near, his wonderful works declare, *Psal.* 75. 1.

But more particularly, let us bring it home to our own experience. It may be, we find ourselves sometimes assaulted with Atheistical thoughts: we are tempted to think God hath left all things below to the course and sway of nature, that our prayers reach him not, as it is *Lam.* 3. 44. that he regards not what evils befall us. But, tell me Saints, have you not enough at hand to stop the mouths of all such temptations? O do but reflect upon your own Experiences, and solemnly ask your own hearts,

(1.) Have you never seen the All-sufficient God in the provisions he hath made for you and yours, throughout all the way that you have gone! Who was it that supplyed to you what-ever was needful in all your straits? Was it not

the Lord? *'Tis he that hath given bread to them that fear him, and hath been ever mindful of his Covenant*, Psal. 111. 5. O do but consider the constancy, seasonableness, and at sometimes the extraordinariness of these provisions, and how they have been given in upon prayer, and shut your eyes if you can, against the convincing evidence of that great truth, Job 36.7. *He withdraweth not his eye from the Righteous.*

(2.) Have you not plainly discerned the care of God in your preservations from so many and great dangers as you have escaped and been carried through hitherto? How is it, that you have over-lived so many mortal dangers, sicknesses, accidents, designs of Enemies to ruine you? It is I presume, beyond question with you, that the very finger of God hath been in these things, and that it is by his care alone, you have been preserved. When God had so signally delivered *David* from a dangerous disease and the plots of Enemies against him, *by this* (saith he) *I know thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me*, Psal. 41. 11. he gathered from those gracious protections, the care God had over him.

(3.) Have you not plainly discerned the hand of God, in the returns and accomplishments of your prayers? Nothing can be more evident than this, to men of observation, Psal. 34. 4, 5, 6. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightned, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* Parallel to this, runs the experience of thousands and ten thousands

of Christians this day; they know they have the petitions they asked of him. The *Mercy* carries the very impress and stamp of the *Duty* upon it. So that we can say, This is the *Mercy*, the very Mercy I have so often *sought* God about. O how satisfying, and convincing are these things!

(4.) Have you not evidently discerned the Lords hand, in the guiding and directing of your paths, to your unforeseen advantage? Things that you never projected for your selves, have been brought about beyond all your thoughts. Many such things are with God; and which of all the Saints hath not found that word *Jer.* 10. 23. verified by clear and undeniable experience? *The way of man is not in himself.* I presume, if you will but look over the mercies you possess thi day, you will find three to one, it may be ten to one thus wrought by the Lord for you. And how satisfying beyond all Arguments in the world are these experiences, That there is a God to whom his people are exceeding dear, *a God that performeth all things for them!*

(5.) Is it not fully convictive, that there is a God who takes care of you, in as much as you have found in all the temptations and difficulties of your lives his promises still fulfilled, and faithfully performed in all those conditions? I appeal to your selves, if you have not seen that Promise made good, Psal. 91. 15. *I will be with him in trouble*; and that 1 Cor. 10. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Have not these been as clearly made out by Providence be-

fore your eyes, as the Sun at Noon day? What room then is left for Atheistical suggestions in your breasts?

The Fourth Motive.

THe Recording and Recognizing of the performances of Providence, will be a singular support to faith in future exigencies. This excellent use of it lyes full in the very eye of the Text. There never befell *David* in all his troubles, a greater strait and distress than this; and doubtless his faith had staggered, had not the considerations of former Providence come in to its relief. From this *Topick* faith argues, and that very strongly and conclusively. So did *David*'s faith in many exigencies: when he was to encounter the *Champion* of the *Philistins*, it was from former Providence that he encouraged himself, 1 *Sam.* 17. 37. And the Apostle *Paul* improves his experiences to the same purpose; 2 *Cor.* 1. 9, 10. Indeed the whole Scripture is full of it: What Christian understands not the exceeding usefulness of those experiences he hath had to relieve and enliven? But I shall not satisfie my self with the common assertion, than which nothing is more trite in the lips of professors: but will labour to shew you, wherein the great usefulness of our Recorded Experiences, for encouraging faith labouring under difficulties, consists. To this purpose, I shall desire the Reader to ponder seriously these following particulars.

Diligenter perpendamus res præteritas, tam præsentes; ut ad futura parati, & accincti simus: fides argumentare solet à præterito, ad præsens, & ab utroque ad futurum. Alsted.

How much advantage those things have upon our souls, which we have already felt and tasted, (1.)

beyond those which were never relished by any former experience? What is Experience? but the bringing down of the objects of faith to the diiudication and test of spiritual sense? Now when any thing hath been once tasted, felt and judged by a former Experience, it is much more easily believed and received when it occurrs again. It's much easier for faith to travel in a path that is well known to it, having formerly trod it, than to beat out a new one which it never trod, nor can see one step before it. Hence it is, though there be a difficulty in all the acts of faith, yet scarce in any like the first adventure it makes upon *Christ*; and the reason lyes here, because in the *subsequent* acts it hath all its former experiences to aid and encourage it; but in the *first adventure* it hath none at all of its own, it takes a path which it never knew before.

To trust God without any tryal or experience, is a more noble act of faith; but to trust him after we have often tryed him, is known to be more easie. O'tis no small advantage to a soul in a new plunge and distress, to be able to say, This is not the first time I have been in these deeps, and yet emerged out of them! Hence it was, that *Christ* rub'd up his Disciples memories with what Providence had formerly wrought for them in a day of straits, Matth. 16. 8, 9, 10, 11. *O ye of little faith, why reason ye among your selves, because ye have brought no bread? do ye not yet understand, neither remember? q. d.* Were ye never under any strait for bread before now? Is this the first difficulty that ever your faith combated with? No, no, you have felt straits, and experienced the power and care of God in supplying them, be-

fore now; and therefore I cannot but call you men of *little faith*; for a very ordinary and small measure of faith, assisted with so much experience as you have had, would enable you to trust God. There is as much difference betwixt believing before, and after experience, as there is betwixt swimming with bladders, and our first venture into the deep waters without them.

What a singular encouragement to faith do former Experiences yield it, by answering all the pleas and objections of unbelief drawn from the *object* of faith? Now there be two things that unbelief stumbles at in *God*: One is his Power, the other his Willingness to help. (2.)

(1.) Unbelief objects the impossibility of relief in deep distresses, Psal. 78. 19. *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness? can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?* O vile and unworthy thoughts of God! proceeding from our measuring the immense and boundless power of God, by our own line and measure: because we see not which way relief should come, we conclude, none is to be expected. But all these reasonings of Unbelief are vanquisht by a serious reflection upon our own Experiences: God hath helped, therefore he can, Isa. 59. 1. *His hand is not shortned:* (*i.e.*) he hath as much power and ability as formerly.

(2.) Unbelief objects against the Will of *God*, and questions, whether he will now be gracious, though he hath formerly been so. But after so many experiences of his readiness to help, what room for doubting remains? Thus *Paul* reasoned from the experience of what he had done, to what he would do, 2 Cor. 1. 10.

and ſo did *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 36. Indeed if a man had never experienced the goodneſs of God to him, it were not ſo heinous a ſin to queſtion his willingneſs to do him good; but what place is left after ſuch frequent tryals?

(2.) It gives great encouragement to faith, as it anſwers the objections of unbelief drawn from the *ſubject*. Now theſe Objections are of two ſorts alſo.

(1.) Such as are drawn from our great unworthineſs. How (ſaith Unbelief) can ſo ſinful and vile a creature expect, that ever God ſhould do this or that for me? 'Tis true, we find he did great things for *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, *Moſes*, *&c.* but theſe were men of eminent holineſs, men that obeyed God, and denyed themſelves for him, and lived more in a day to his glory, than ever I did all my dayes.

Well, but what ſignifies all this to a ſoul, that under all its ſenſible vileneſs and unworthineſs hath taſted the goodneſs of God as well as they? As unworthy as I am, God hath been good to me notwithſtanding: his mercy appeared firſt to me, when I was worſe than I am now, both in *condition* and *diſpoſition*; and therefore I will ſtill expect the continuance of his goodneſs to me, though I deſerve it not. *If when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life?* Rom. 5. 10.

(2.) Such as are drawn from the extremity of our preſent condition, if troubles or dangers grow to an height, and we ſee nothing but ruine and miſery in the eye of reaſon before us; now unbelief becomes importune and trouble-

ome to the ſoul; now where are thy prayers, hy hopes, yea, where is now thy God?

But all this is eaſily put by and avoided, by conſulting our experiences in former caſes. This s not the firſt time I have been in theſe ſtraits, or the firſt time I have had the ſame doubts and deſpondencies; and yet, God hath carried me hrough all, *Pſal.* 77. 7, 8, 9, *&c.* This is it that uffers not a Chriſtian to unravel all his hopes in n hour of temptation. O how uſeful are theſe hings to the people of God!

The Fifth Motive.

THe Recognition of former Providences will miniſter to your ſouls continual matter of praiſe and thanksgiving, which is the very employment of the Angels in Heaven, and the ſweeteſt part of our lives on Earth.

See *Pſal.* 61. 7, 8. If God will prepare Mercy and Truth for *David*, he will prepare Praiſes for his God, and that daily. So Pſal. 71. 6. *By thee have I been holden up from the womb, thou art he that took me out of my Mothers bowels*; (there Mercies from the beginning are recognized.) *My praiſe ſhall be continually of thee*: there the natural reſult of thoſe recognitions is expreſſed.

There be five things belonging to the praiſe of God, and all of them have relation to his Providences exerciſed about us.

(1.) A careful Obſervation of the Mercies we receive from him, *Iſa.* 41. 17, 18, 19, 20. This is fundamental to all praiſe: God cannot be glorified for the mercies we never noted.

(2.) A

(2.) A faithful Remembrance of the favo[urs] received, Pſal. 103. 2. *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſo[ul] and forget not all his benefits.* Hence the Lo[rd] brands the Ingratitude of his people, Pſal. 106. 1[3] *They ſoon forgat his works.*

(3.) A due Appreciation and Valuation o[f] every Providence that doth us good, 1 *Sam.* 12. 24. That Providence that fed them in the Wilderne[ſs] with Manna, was a moſt remarkable Providenc[e] to them; but they not valuing it at its worth, God had not that praiſe for it which he e[x]pected, *Numb.* 11. 6.

(4.) The Excitation of all the faculties an[d] powers of the ſoul in the acknowledgement o[f] theſe mercies to us. Thus *David*, Pſal. 103. 1. *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul; and all that is within m[e] bleſs his holy name.* Soul-praiſe is the very ſo[ul] of praiſe: this is the fat and marrow of the thank-offering.

(5.) A ſuitable Retribution for the mercie[s] received. This *David* was careful about, *Pſal.* 116. 1. And the Lord taxes good *Hezekiah* for the neglect of it, 2 *Chron.* 32. 24, 25. This con[-] ſiſts in a full and hearty reſignation of all to him, that we have received by Providence from him; and in our willingneſs actually to part with all for him, when he ſhall remand it.

Thus you ſee, how all the ingredients to praiſe, have reſpect to Providences. But more particularly I will ſhew you, that as all the ingredients of praiſe have reſpect to Providences, ſo all the motives and Arguments obliging and engaging ſouls to praiſe, are found therein alſo. To this end conſider, how the mercy and goodneſs of God is exhibited by Providence, to excite our thankfulneſs.

(1.) The

(1.) That the goodness and mercy of God is let out upon his people in his Providences about them: and this is the very root of praise. It is not so much the possession that Providence gives us of such or such comforts, as the goodness and kindness of God in the dispensing of them, that engages a gracious soul to praise, Psal. 63. 3. *Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.* To give, maintain and preserve our life, are choice acts of Providences: but to do all this in a way of grace and loving-kindness, this is far better than the gifts themselves: life is but the shadow of death without it: this is the mercy that crowns all other mercies, *Psal.* 103. 4. It's this a sanctified soul desires God would manifest in every Providence about him, *Psal.* 17. 7. and what is our praising of God else, but our shewing forth that loving-kindness, which he sheweth us in his Providences? *Psal.* 92. 1, 2.

(2.) As the loving-kindness of God manifested in Providences, is a motive to praise; so the *free* and *undeserved* favours of God, dispensed by the hand of Providence, oblige the soul to praise. This was the consideration that melted *David*'s heart into a thankful praising frame, even the consideration of the free and undeserved favours cast in upon him by Providence, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *What am I? O Lord God: and what is my Fathers house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* (*i. e.*) raised me by Providence from a mean condition to all this dignity: *from following the Ewes, to feed Jacob his people*, Psal. 78. 70, 71. O this is it that engages thankfulness, *Gen.* 32. 10.

(3) As

(3.) As the freeneſs of mercies diſpenſed by Providence, engageth praiſe; ſo the *Multitudes* of mercies heaped this way upon us, ſtrongly oblige the ſoul to thankfulneſs. Thus *David* comes before the Lord encompaſſed with a multitude of mercies to praiſe him, *Pſal.* 5.7. We have our loads of mercies, and that every day, *Pſalm* 68. 19. O what a rich heap will the mercies of one day make, being laid together!

(4.) As the multitudes of mercies diſpenſed by Providence, oblige to praiſe; ſo the *tenderneſs* of Gods mercy manifeſted in his Providence, leaves the ſoul under a ſtrong obligation to thankfulneſs. We ſee what tender reſentments the Lord hath of all our wants, ſtraits and burdens, Pſalm 103. 13. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He is full of bowels, as that word πολύσπλαγχνος in *James* 5. 11. ſignifies. Yea, there are not only bowels of compaſſion in our God, but the tenderneſs of bowels, like thoſe of a Mother to her ſucking child, *Iſa.* 49. 15. He feels all our pains as if the apple of his eye were touched, *Zech.* 2. 8. and all this is diſcovered to his people in the way of his Providences with them, *Pſal.* 111. 2, 3, 4. O who of all the Children of God hath not often found this in his Providences? And who can ſee it, and not be filled with thankfulneſs? All theſe are ſo many bands clapt by Providence upon the ſoul, to oblige it to a life of praiſe. Hence it is, that the prayers of the Saints are ſo full of thankſgivings upon theſe accounts: 'tis ſweet to recount them to the Lord in prayer: to lye at his feet in an holy aſtoniſhment at his gracious condeſcenſions to poor worms.

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The Sixth Motive.

THe due observation of Providence will endear Jesus Christ every day more and more to your souls. *Christ* is the Channel of grace and mercy: through him are all the *decursus & recursus gratiarum*, all the streams of mercy that flow from God to us, and all the returns of praise from us to God, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22. All things are ours upon no other title, but our being his.

Now there be six things in Providence, that are exceedingly endearing of the *Lord Jesus Christ* to his people: and these are the most sweet and delicious parts of all our enjoyments.

The purchase of all those mercies which Providences convey to us, is by his own blood: for not only spiritual and eternal mercies, but even all our temporal ones, are the acquisition of his blood. Look, as sin forfeited all, so *Christ* restored all these mercies again to us by his death. Sin had so shut up the womb of mercy, that had not *Christ* made an attonement by his death, it could never have brought forth one mercy to all eternity for us. It is *with him* that God *freely gives us all things*, Rom. 8. 32. Heaven it self, and all things needful to bring us thither, among which, is principally included the Tutelage and Aid of Divine Providence: so that whatever good we receive from the hand of Providence, we must put it upon the score of Christs blood; and when we receive it, we may say, 'Tis the price of blood: 'Tis a mercy rising up out of the death of Christ: It cost him dear, though it come to me freely:

Bona gratiæ & gloriæ, ac pro omnibus divinæ tutelæ opis, ac providentiæ subscutum. Poli Synopsis in loc.

freely: It's *sweet* in the *possession*, but costly in the *acquisition*. Now this is a most endearing consideration: did *Christ* dye, that these mercies might live? Did he pay his invaluable blood to purchase these comforts, that I possess? O what transcendent, matchless love, was the love of Christ! You have known Parents that have laid out all their stock of money to purchase Estates for their Children; but when did you hear of any that spent the whole stock and treasure of their blood, to make a purchase for them? If the life of Christ had not been so afflictive and sad to him, ours could not have been so sweet and comfortable to us: 'tis through his poverty we are enriched, 2 *Cor.* 8. 9. These sweet mercies that are born of Providence every day, are the fruits of *the travel of his soul.*

(2.) The sanctification of all, is by our union with Christ: 'tis by vertue of our union with his person, that we enjoy the sanctified gifts and blessings of Providence. All these are mercies additional to that great mercy *CHRIST*, *Matth.* 6. 33. they are given with him, as in *Rom.* 8. 32. this is the Tenure by which we hold them, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22, 23. Look, what we lost in *Adam*, is restored again with Advantage in *Christ*: immediately upon the fall, that curse, *Gen.* 2. 17. seized upon all the miserable posterity of *Adam*, and upon all their comforts, *outward* as well as *inward*; and this still lyes heavy upon them: All that Providence doth for them that are Christless, is but to feed so many poor condemned wretches, till the sentence they are under, be executed upon them: it is indeed bountiful and open-handed to many of them; and fills them with Earthly comforts;

but

but not one ſpecial ſanctified mercy is to be found among all their enjoyments: theſe gifts of Providence do but deceive, defile and deſtroy them through their own corruptions; and for want of union with Chriſt, Prov. 1. 32. *The proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.*

But when a man is once in Chriſt, then all Providences are ſanctified and ſweet, Tit. 1. 15. *Unto the pure, all things are pure. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the treaſures of many wicked,* Pſal. 37. 16. Now Chriſt becomes an head of *Influence*, as well as of *Dominion*; and in all things he conſults the good of his own members, *Eph.* 1. 22.

The diſpenſation of all our comforts and mercies, is by his direction and appointment. It's true, the *Angels* are employed in the Kingdom of Providence, they move the wheels, (*i. e.*) are inſtrumental in all the revolutions in this lower world; but ſtill they receive directions and orders from Chriſt, as you may ſee in that admirable Scheme of Providences, *Ezek.* 1. 25, 26, *&c.* Now what an endearing meditation is this! What ever Creature be inſtrumental for any good to you, it's your Lord Jeſus Chriſt that gave the orders and commands to that Creature to do it; and without it they could have done nothing for you: It's your head in Heaven that conſults your peace and comfort on Earth: theſe be the fruits of his care for you. So in the prevention and reſtraints of evil; 'tis he that bridles in the wrath of Devils and men; he holds the reins in his own hands, *Rev.* 2. 10. 'Twas the care of Chriſt over his poor Sheep at *Damaſcus*, that ſtopt the raging Adverſary who was upon

the way, designing to destroy them, *Acts* 9.

(4.) The *continuation* of all your mercies and comforts, outward as well as inward, is the fruit of his Intercession in Heaven for you. For look, as the offering up of the Lamb of God a Sacrifice for sin, opened the door of mercy at first; so his appearing before God as a Lamb that had been slain, still keeps that door of mercy open, *Rev.* 5. 6. *Heb.* 9. 24. By this his intercession, our peace and comforts are prolonged to us, *Zech.* 1. 12, 13. Every sin we commit, would put an end to the mercies we possess, were it not for that caution which is put in for us by it, 1 John 2. 1, 2. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins*, &c. This stops all pleas, and procures new pardons for new sins. Hence it is *he saves to the uttermost*, to the last compleating act, *Heb.* 7. 25. New sins do not irritate our former pardons, nor cut off our priviledges settled upon us in Christ.

(5.) The returns and answers of all your prayers and cryes to Heaven for the removing of your afflictions, or supply of your wants, are all procured and obtained for you by Jesus Christ. He is the Master of your requests; and were it not that God had respect to him, he would never regard your cryes to him, nor return any answer of peace to you, how great soever your distresses should be, *Rev.* 8. 3, 4. 'Tis his name that gives our prayers their acceptance, *John* 15. 16. because the Father can deny him nothing, therefore your prayers are not denyed. Doth God condescend to hear you in the day of trouble? Doth he convince you by your own experience, that your

prayers have *power with God, and do prevail?* O see how much you owe to your dear Lord Jesus Christ, for this high and glorious priviledge!

(6.) The Covenant of Grace, in which all your comfortable enjoyments are comprized, and by which they are secured, sanctified, and sweetned to you, is made in Christ, and ratified by him betwixt God and you. Your mercies are all comprized in this Covenant, even your daily bread, *Psalm* 111. 5. as well as your justification, and other spiritual mercies.

'Tis your Covenant interest, that secures to you what ever it comprizes, *Isa.* 55. 3. hence they are called the sure mercies of *David.*

Now this is it that sanctifies them, and gives them the nature of special and peculiar mercies. One [illegible] mercy is worth a thousand common mercies. And being sanctified and special mercies, they must needs be exceeding sweet beyond all other mercies. On these accounts it was that *David* so rejoiced in his Covenant Interest, though laden with many afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 23. 5.

But now all this hangs entirely upon Christ. The New Testament is in his blood, 1 *Cor.* 11. 25. and whatever mercies you reap from that Covenant, you must thank the Lord Jesus Christ for them. Put all this together, and then think how such considerations will endear Christ to your souls!

The Seventh Motive.

THe due observations of Providence have a marvellous efficacy to melt the heart, and make it thaw and relent ingenuously before the Lord.

How can a sanctified heart do less, than melt into tears, whilst it either *considers* the dealings of God from time to time with it: or *compares* the mercies received, with the sins committed; or the *different* administrations of Providence towards it *self* and *others*?

Let a man but set himself to think deliberately and closely of the wayes of Providence towards him, let him but follow the Tract of Providence, as it hath led him all along the way that he hath gone, and if there be any principle of gracious tenderness in him, he shall meet with variety of occasions to excite and draw it forth. Reader, go back with thy serious thoughts (1.) To the beginning of the wayes of God with thee, the mercies that brake out early in thy youth, even the first born mercies from the womb of Providence; and thou wilt say, What need I go farther? Here is enough, not only to move, but overwhelm my heart. *May I not from this time cry unto thee, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth*, Jer. 3. 4. What a critical time is the time of youth? it's the moulding age; and (ordinarily) according to the course of those leading Providences, after Providences do steer their course. What levity, rashness, ignorance and strong propensions to sin and ruine accompanied that age? How many being then left to the sway

of their own lusts, run themselves into those sins and miseries, which they never recover themselves from to their dying day? These, like the errors of the first concoction, are rarely rectified afterwards. Did the Lord guide thee by his Providence, when but a Child? Did he then preserve thee from those follies and miscarriages, which blast the very blossom, and nip the bud, so that no good fruit is to be expected afterwards? Did he then cast thee into such families, or among such company and acquaintance, as moulded and formed thy spirit to a better temper? Did he then direct thee into that way of employment, wherein thou hast seen so large a train of happy consequents ever since following thee? And wilt thou not from henceforth say, *My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?*

Or (2.) Let us but bring our thoughts close to the Providences of after times, and consider how the several changes and removes of our lives have been ordered for us: Things we never foresaw nor designed (but much better for us, than what we did design) have been all along ordered for us. *The way of man is not in himself. Gods thoughts have not been our thoughts, nor his wayes our wayes.* Among the eminent mercies of thy life, Reader, how many of them have been meer *surprizals* to thee? Thy own projects have been thrust aside, to make way for better things designed by Providence for thee.

Nay, (3.) Do but observe the *Springs* and *Autumns* of Providence, in what order they have *flourished* and *faded* with thee, and thou wilt find thy self over-powered with the sense of Divine Wisdom and Goodness: when necessity required,

such a friend was stirred up to help thee, such a place opened to receive thee, such a Relation raised up or continued to refresh thee: and no sooner doth Providence deprive thee of any of them, but either thy need of them ceases, or some other way is opened to thee. O the depth of Gods Wisdom and Goodness! O the matchless tenderness of God to his people!

(4.) Compare the dealings of Providence with you and others, yea, with others that sprang up with you in the same generation, it may be, in the same families, and from the same Parents, it may be in families greater and more flourishing in the world than yours, and see the difference, upon many great accounts, it hath made betwixt you and them. I knew a *Christian*, who after many years separation, was visited by his own Brother, the very sight of whom, wrought upon him, much as the sight of *Benjamin* did upon *Joseph*, so that he could not refrain to fall upon his neck, and weep for joy; but after a few hours spent together, finding the spirit of his Brother, not only estranged from all that's spiritual and serious, but also very vain and prophane, he hastened to his chamber, shut the door upon him, threw himself down at the feet of God, and with flowing eyes, and a melting heart, admired the distinguishing Grace of God, saying, Was not *Esau Jacob's* Brother? O Grace, Grace, astonishing Grace!

(5.) Compare the carriage of Providence towards you, with your own carriage towards the Lord; and it must needs melt your hearts to find so much mercy bestowed, where so much sin hath been committed. What place did you ever live

in, where you cannot remember great provocations committed, and manifold mercies notwithstanding that, received? O with how many *notwithstandings* and *nevertheleſſes*, hath the Lord done you good in every place! What Relation hath not been abuſed by ſin; and yet both raiſed up and continued by Providence for your comfort? In every place God hath left the marks of his goodneſs, and you the remembrances of your ſinfulneſs: give your ſelves but leave to think of theſe things, and it's ſtrange if your hearts relent not at the remembrance of them.

(6.) Or Laſtly, Do but compare your dangers with your fears, and both with the ſtrange out-letts and doors of eſcape Providence hath opened, and it cannot do leſs than over-power you with a full ſenſe of divine care and goodneſs.

There have been dark clouds ſeen to riſe over you, judgement even at your door, ſometimes threatning your life, ſometimes your liberty, ſometimes your eſtates, and ſometimes your dearest relations, in whom it may be, your life was bound up; remember in that day, what faintneſs of ſpirit ſeized you, what charges of guilt ſtirring up fears of the iſſue within you: You turned to the Lord in that diſtreſs, and hath he not made a way to eſcape, and delivered you from all your fears? *Pſal* 34. 4.

Oh is your life ſuch a continued throng, ſuch a diſtracted hurry, that there is no room to be found with Chriſtians to ſit alone, and think on theſe things, and preſs theſe marvellous diſcoveries of God in his Providences upon their own hearts? Surely, might theſe things but lye upon

our hearts, talk with our thoughts by day, and lodge with us at night; they would even force their passage down to our very Reins.

The Eighth Motive.

DUe observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquillity in your minds amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world.

Psal. 4. 8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety.* He resolves the sinful fears of Events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious presages: he will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him, and he means not to lose the comfort of one nights rest, nor bring the evil of to morrow upon the day, but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoyes the sweet felicity of a resigned will.

Now this Tranquillity of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of Providence, as by any thing whatsoever. Hence it was, that our *Lord Jesus Christ*, when he would cure the *Disciples* anxious and distracting sollicitudes about a livelihood, bids them consider the care Providence hath over the Birds of the air, and the Lillies of the field, how it feeds the one, and clothes the other without any anxious care of theirs; and would have them well consider those Providences, and reason themselves into a calm and sweet composure of spirit from those considerations, *Mat.* 6. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

Two things destroy the peace and tranquillity of our lives, our *bewailing past disappointments*, or *fearing future ones*. But would we once learn prevision and provision to be divine prerogatives, and take notice how often Providence baffles those that pretend to it, causing the good they foresaw (according to their conjectures) coming to their hand, yet to balk them and flee from them: and the evil they thought themselves sufficiently secured from, to invade them. I say, would we consider how Providence daily baffles these Pretensions of men, and asserts its own Dominion, it would greatly conduce to the tranquillity of our lives.

This is a great truth, that there is no face of Adversity so formidable, but being viewed from this station, would become amicable. Now there be several things in the consideration of Providence, that naturally and kindly compose the mind of a Christian to peace, and bring it to a sweet rest, whilst events hang in a doubtful suspense.

As First, The Supremacy of Providence, and its uncontroulable power in working. This is often seen in the good that it brings us in a way that's above the thoughts and cares of our minds, or labour of our hands. *I had not thought* (said *Jacob*) *to have seen thy face; and lo, God hath shewed me thy seed also*, Gen. 48. 11. There is a frequent coincidency of Providences in a way of surprizal, which from no appearance, or the remotest tendency of outward causes could be foreseen, but rather falls visibly cross to the present *Scheme*, and posture of our affairs. Nothing tends to convince us of the vanity and (1.

folly of our own follicitudes and projections, more than this doth.

(2.) The profound Wiſdom of Providence in all that it *performeth* for the people of God. The Wheels are full of eyes, *Ezek.* 1. 18. (*i.e.*) there is an intelligent and wiſe Spirit that ſits upon, and governs the affairs of this world.

This Wiſdom ſhines out to us in the unexpected, yea, contrary events of things. How often have we been courting ſome beautiful appearance that invited our ſenſes, and with trembling ſhun'd the formidable face of other things, when notwithſtanding the iſſues of Providence have convinced us, that our danger lay in what we courted, and our good in what we ſo ſtudiouſly declined? This alſo is a ſweet principle of peace and quiet to the Chriſtians mind, that he knows not, but his good may be imported in what ſeemed to threaten his ruine. Many were the diſtreſſes and ſtraits of *Iſrael* in the Wilderneſs, but all was *to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end*, Deut. 8. 16. Sad and diſmal was the face of that Providence that ſent them out of their own land, into the land of the *Chaldeans*; yet even this was a project to do them good, *Jer.* 24. 5. How often have we retracted our raſh and headlong cenſures of things upon experience of this truth! and been taught to bleſs our afflictions and diſappointments in the name of the Lord. Many a time have we kiſſed thoſe troubles at parting, which we met with trembling. And what can promote peace under doubtful Providences more effectually than this?

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The experiences we have had throughout our lives of the faithfulness and constancy of Providence, are of excellent use to allay and quiet our hearts in any trouble that befalls us. *Hitherto God hath helped*, 1 Sam. 7. 12. We never found him wanting to us in any case hitherto: this is not the first strait we have been in: the first time that our hearts and hopes have been low. Surely, he is the same God now as heretofore, his hand is not shortned, neither doth his faithfulness fail. O recount in how great extremities former experience hath taught you not to despair! (3.)

The conjectures Christians may make of the way of Providence towards them, from what its former methods have been towards them, is exceeding quieting and comfortable. It's usual with Christians, to compare times with times, and to guess at the issue of one Providence by another. The Saints do know what course Providence usually holds, and accordingly with great probability collect what they may expect from what in like cases they have formerly observed. Christian, examine thine own heart, and its former observations, and thou wilt find, as *Psal.* 89. 30, 31, 32. that it's usually the way of God to prepare some smart rods to correct thee, when either thy heart hath secretly revolted from God, and is grown vain, careless and sensual, or when thy steps have declined, and thou hast turned aside to the commission of iniquity. And then when those rods have been sanctified to humble, reduce and purge thy heart, it's usually observed, that those sad Providences are then upon the change, and then the Lord changes the voice of his Providence towards thee, Jer. 3. 12, 13. (4.) ( )

Go, and proclaim these words towards the North, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, &c.

If therefore I find the blessed effects of the rod upon me, that it hath done its work, to break the hard heart, and pull down the proud heart, and awaken the drowsie heart, and quicken the slothful, negligent, lazy heart; now with great probability I may conjecture, a more comfortable aspect of Providence will quickly appear, the *refreshing* and reviving time is nigh.

(5.) It is usual with Christians, to argue themselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things is most forlorn, by comparing the Providences of God one with another.

(1.) It is a mighty composing meditation, when we compare the Providences of God towards the inanimate and irrational Creatures, with his Providences towards us. Doth he take care for the very Fowls of the air, for whom no man provides, as well as those at the door which we daily feed? Doth he so clothe the very Grass of the field? hear the young Ravens, when they cry for meat? and can it be supposed, he should forget his own people, that are of much more value than these?

(2.) Or if we compare the bounty and care that Providence hath expressed to the Enemies of God, how it feeds and clothes and protects them, even whilst they are fighting against him with his own mercies; it cannot but quiet and satisfie us, that surely he will not be wanting to that people

upon whom he hath ſet his love, to whom he hath given his Son, and for whom he hath deſigned Heaven it ſelf.

(3.) Or Laſtly, it muſt needs quiet us, when we conſider, what the Lord did for us in the way of his Providence, when we our ſelves were in the ſtate of nature, and enmity againſt God. Did he not then look after us, when we knew him not? provided for us, when we owned him not in any of his mercies? beſtowed thouſands of mercies upon us, when we had no title to Chriſt or any one promiſe? and will he now do leſs for us, ſince we are reconciled and become his Children?

Surely, ſuch conſiderations as theſe, cannot but fill the ſoul with peace, and preſerve the tranquillity of it under the moſt diſtracting Providences.

The Ninth Motive.

DUe obſervations of the wayes of God in his Providences towards us, have an excellent uſefulneſs and aptitude to advance and improve Holineſs in our hearts and lives. For,

The Holineſs of God is manifeſted to us in all his works of Providence, Pſal. 145. 17. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.* The Inſtruments uſed by Providence may be very ſinful & wicked, they may aim at baſe ends, & make uſe of wicked mediums to attain them; but it's certain Gods deſigns are moſt pure, and all his workings are ſo too. Though he permits, limits, orders and over-rules many unholy perſons and actions; yet (1.)

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in all he works like himself; and his Holiness is no more defiled and stained by their impurity, than the Sun-beams are by the noisome exhalations of a dunghill, Deut. 32. 4. *He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his wayes are judgement, a God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is he.* So that in all his Providences he sets before us a perfect pattern of holiness, that we might be holy in all our wayes, as our Father is in all his wayes. But this is not all.

(2.) His Providences if duely observed, promote Holiness, by stopping up our way to sin. Oh if men would but note the designs of God in his preventive Providences, how useful would it be to keep them upright and holy in their wayes? For why is it, that the Lord so often hedges up our way with thorns, as it is *Hosea* 2. 6. but that we should not find our paths to sin? Why doth he clogg us, but to prevent our straying from him? 2 Cor. 12. 7. *Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me.* O 'tis good to attend to these works of God, and study the meaning of them. Sometimes Providence crosseth a hopeful thriving project to advance our estate, and frustrates all our labours and cares; Why is this? but to hide pride from man. Shouldst thou prosper in the world, that prosperity might be thy snare, and make thee a proud, sensual, vain soul; the Lord Jesus sees this, and therefore withdraws the food and fuel from thy corruptions.

It may be thou hast a crazy, diseased, weak body; thou labourest under often infirmities: in this, the Wisdom and Care of God over thy soul is manifested; for wert thou not so clogged,

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how probable is it, that much more guilt might be contracted? Your poverty doth but clog your pride; reproaches clog your ambition: want prevents wantonness: sickness of body conduces to the prevention of many inward gripes of conscience, and groans under guilt.

The Providences of God may be observed to conduce to our holiness, not only by preventing sin, that we may not fall into it; but also by purging our sins when we are fallen into them, Isa. 27. 9. *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.* So *Dan.* 11. 33, 34, 35. they are of the same use that fire and water are for purging and cleansing; not that they can purge us from sin in their own vertue and power, for if so, those that have most afflictions would have most grace also; but it is in the vertue of Christ's blood, and God's blessing upon afflictive Providences, that they purge us from sin. A *Cross* without a *Christ* never did any man good. Now in God's afflictive Providences for sin there are many things that tend to the purging of it. For

(1.) Such rebukes of Providence discover the displeasure of God against us: the Lord frowns upon us in those Providences. Our father is angry, and these are the tokens of it; and nothing works more to the melting of a gracious heart than this. Must not the heart of a Child melt and break whil'st the father is angry. O this is more bitter to our Spirits than all the smart and anguish of the affliction can be to our flesh. See *Psal.* 38. 1, 2, 3. *O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure: for thine arrows stick fast in me; and thine hand presseth*

(3.) God would not rub so hard, if were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures: lover pu rity so well, he had rath see a ho than a sp in his childs g ment. G nalls Ch stian A mour, 2. p. 22

me fore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

(2.) By these rebukes of sin, the evil of sin is discovered more sensibly to us, and we are made to see more clearly the evil of it in these glasses of affliction which Providence at such times sets before us, than formerly we ever saw. *Jer.* 2. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee; and thy backslidings shall reprove thee, know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of Hosts.* O the Gall and Wormwood that we taste in it under God's rebukes for it!

(3.) Providence blasts and frustrates all sinful projects to the people of God: whoever thrives in them, they shall not. *Isa.* 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And this also convinces them of the folly that is in sin, and makes them cleave to the way of simplicity and integrity.

4.) Holiness is promoted in the soul by cautioning and warning the soul against sin for time to come. *Job* 34. 31. *I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more.* O happy Providences, how smart soever, that make the soul for ever afraid of sin! surely such rods are well bestow'd. This gives God his end: and if ever we sorrowed after a godly sort, in the day of our troubles it will work this carefulness. 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. *Behold this self same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you,* &c. O if ever a man have been under a sanctified rod which hath shewed him the evil of sin, and kindly humbled him for it; and a temptation should again

ſollicite him to the ſame evil: Why thinks he, what a madneſs is it for me to buy repentance at ſo dear a rate? Have I not ſmarted enough already? You may as well ask me, whether I will run again into the fire, after I have been already ſcorcht in it?

To conclude, Providences do greatly improve (5.) and promote holineſs by drawing the Soul into the preſence of God, and giving it the opportunity and occaſion of much communion with him. Comfortable Providences will do this, they will melt a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies, and ſo pain his bowels that he ſhall not be quiet till he have found a place to pour out his Soul in thankfulneſs to the Lord. 2 *Sam.* 7. 18.

Afflictive Providences will drive us to the feet of God, and there make us to judge and condemn our ſelves. And all this hath an excellent uſe to deſtroy ſin, and promote holineſs in the Soul.

The Tenth Motive.

LAſtly, *The Conſideration and ſtudy of Providence will be of ſingular uſe to us in a dying hour.* Hereby we treaſure up that which will ſingularly ſweeten our death to us, and greatly aſſiſt our faith in the laſt encounter. You find when *Jacob* dyed, what reflections he had upon the dealings of God with him in the various Providences of his life. See *Gen.* 48. 3, 7, 15, 16. In like manner you find *Joſhua* recording the Providences of God when at the brink of the grave; they were the ſubject of his dying diſ-

course. *Josh.* 24. And I cannot but think it a sweet close to the life of any Christian: It must needs sweeten a death-bed to recount there the several remarkable passages of God's care and love to us from our beginning to that day: to reflect upon the mercies that went along with us all the way, when we are come to the end of it. O Christians, treasure up these instances for such a time as that is; that you may go out of the world blessing God for *all the goodness and truth* he hath performed to you all your life long. Now the meditations of these things must needs be of great use in that day, if you consider the following particulars.

(1.) The time of Death is the time when Souls are usually most violently assaulted by Satan with horrid temptations and black suggestions. We may say of that figurative, as it's said of the natural Serpent, *nunquam nisi moriens, producitur in longum,* He never exerts his utmost rage till the last encounter; and then his great design is to perswade the Saints, that God loves them not, hath no care nor regard for them, nor their cryes; though they pray for ease and cry for sparing mercy, they see none comes. He handles them with as much roughness and severity as other men; yea, many of the vilest and most dissolute wretches endure less torments, and are more gently handled than they. *Psal.* 73. 4. *there are no bands in their death,* when as thou must go through a long lane of sickness to the grave, and endure many deaths in one.

But what credit can these plausible tales of Satan obtain with a Christian who hath been treasuring up all his life long the *memorials* of God's

tender regard both to his wants and prayers, and that hath carefully remarked the evident returns of his prayers, and gracious condescensions of God to him from his beginning to that moment? In this case his faith is mightily assisted by thousands of experiences which back and encourage it, and will not suffer the soul to give up so easily a truth which he hath so often sensibly felt and tasted. I am sure (saith he) God hath had a tender fatherly care of me ever since I became his: he never failed me yet in any former strait; and I cannot believe he will do so now. I know his love is like himself, unchangeable. *Joh.* 13. 1. *having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end: for this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death. Psal.* 48. 14. Did he love me in my youth, and will he cast me off in my decrepit age? *O God,* (saith the Psalmist) *thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works, now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not, Psal.* 71. 17, 18.

At death the Saints are engaged in the last, and (2. one of the most eminent works of faith, even the committing themselves into the hands of God, when we are lanching forth into that vast Eternity, and entring into that new state which will make so great a change upon us in a moment. In this Christ sets us a pattern, *Luke* 23. 46. *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*; and having said thus he gave up the Ghost. So *Stephen* at his death, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and immediately fell asleep, Act.* 7. 59.

There be two signal and remarkable acts of

faith, both exceedingly difficult, *viz.* its first act, and its last. The first is a great venture that it makes of it self upon Christ: and the last is a great venture too, to cast it self into the Ocean of Eternity upon the credit of a Promise. But yet I know the first adventure of the Soul upon Christ is much more difficult than the last adventure upon death; and that which makes it so is in great measure, the manifold recorded experiences that the Soul hath been gathering up from the day of its espousals to Christ unto its dying which is (in a sense) its marriage day. Oh with what encouragement may a Soul throw himself into the arms of that God with whom he hath so long conversed and walked in this world! Whose visits have been sweet and frequent, with whom the soul hath contracted so intimate acquaintance in this world; whom it hath committed all its affairs to formerly, and still found him a faithful God; and now hath no reason to doubt, but it shall find him so in this last distress and exigence also.

3.) At death the people of God receive the last mercies that ever they shall receive in this world by the hand of Providence, and are immediately to make up their Accounts with God for all the mercies that ever they received from his hand. What can be more suitable therefore to a dying person, than to recount with himself the mercies of his whole life, the manifold receipts of favour for which he is to reckon with God speedily: and how shall this be done without a due and serious observation and recording of them now? I know there are thousands of mercies forgotten by the best of Christians: a memory of brass cannot

contain them: And I know also that Jesus Christ must make up the Account for us, or it will never pass with God; yet it is our duty to keep the Accounts of our own mercies, and how they have been improv'd by us, for we are Stewards, and then are to give an Account of our Stewardship.

At death we owe an Account also to men, (4.) and stand obliged (if there be opportunity for it) to make known to them that survive us what we have seen and found of God in this world, that we may leave a testimony for God with men, and bring up a good report upon his ways. Thus dying *Jacob* when *Joseph* was come to take his last farewell of him in this world, strengthened himself and sate upon the bed, and related to him the eminent appearances of God to him, and the places where, *Gen.* 48. 2, 3. as also an account of his afflictions, *Verse* 7. So *Joshua* in his last speech to the people makes it his business to vindicate and clear the truth of the Promises, by recounting to them how the Providence of God had fulfill'd the same to a tittle in his day. *Josh.* 23. 14. *And behold* (saith he) *this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*

And certainly 'tis of great importance to the world, to understand the Judgements, and hear of the Experiences of dying men. They of all men are presumed to be most wise and most serious: Besides, this is the last opportunity that ever we shall have in this world to speak for God. O then what a sweet thing would it be

to close up our lives with an honourable Account of the ways of God! to go out of the world blessing him for all the mercies and truth which he hath here performed to us! how would this encourage weak Christians, and convince the Atheistical world, that verily there is a reality and an excellency in the ways and people of God!

5.) At death we begin the *Angelical life* of praise and thanksgiving. We then enter upon that everlasting sweet employment; and as I doubt not but the Providences in which we were concerned in this world will be a part of that Song which we shall sing in Heaven, so certainly it will become us to tune our hearts and tongues for it whil'st we are here, and especially when we are ready to enter upon that blessed state. O therefore let it be your daily meditation and study what God hath been to you, and done for you, from the beginning of his way hitherto.

And thus I have spread before you some encouragements to this blessed work. Oh that you would be perswaded to this lovely and every way beneficial practice. This I dare presume to say, that whoever finds a careful and a thankful heart to record and treasure up the daily experiences of God's mercy to him, shall never want new mercies to record to his dying day. It was said of *Claudian* that he wanted matter suitable to the excellency of his parts; but where is the head or heart that is suitable to this matter? who can utter the mighty works of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise? *Psal.* 106. 2.

Thus

Thus I have through the aid of Providence dispatched the main design I aimed at in the choice of this subject. All that remains will now be speedily finished in some few Corollaries to be briefly noted upon the whole, and three or four practical Cases to be stated. You have heard how Providence *performeth all things for you.* Learn thence,

First Corollary.

THat God is therefore to be owned by you in all that befalls you in this world, whether it be in a way of success and comfort, or of trouble and affliction. O 'tis your duty to observe his hand and disposal: When God gives you comforts, 'tis your great evil not to observe his hand in them. Hence was that charge against *Israel*, *Hos.* 2. 8. *She did not know that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oil, and multiplied her Silver and Gold (i. e.)* she did not actually and affectionately consider my care over her and goodness to her, in these mercies. And so for afflictions, 'tis a great wickedness, when God's hand is lifted up not to see it. *Isa.* 26. 11. *The Ox knows his owner, and the Ass his masters crib, Isa.* 1. 3. the most dull and stupid creatures know their benefactors. O look to the hand of God in all; and know, that neither your comforts nor afflictions do arise out of the dust, or spring up out of the ground.

Second.

Second Corollary.

IF God perform all things for you, *how great is his condescension to and care over his people? What is man* (saith Job, chap. 7. v. 17, 18.) *that thou shouldst magnifie him, and set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Such is his tender care over you that he withdraws not his eye from you. See *Job* 36. 7. left any hurt you, he himself will guard and keep you day and night. *Isa.* 27. 3. Should he withdraw his eye or hand one moment from you, that moment would be your ruine. Ten thousand evils watch but for such an opportunity, to rush in upon you, and destroy you and all your comforts. You are too dear to him to be trusted in any hand but his own. *Deut.* 33. 3. *All his Saints are in thy hand.*

Third Corollary.

LEarn hence *how you are obliged to perform all duties and services for God, who performeth all things for you.* It was the wish of a good man, *optarem id me esse Deo, quod est mihi manus mea,* Oh that I could be to God what my hand is to me, *Viz.* a serviceable useful instrument. Shall God do all things for you, and will you do nothing for God? Is Providence every moment at work for you, and will you be idle? To what purpose then is all that God hath done for you? Is it not the

aim and design of all, to make you a fruitful people? If God plant, and fence, and water you by Providence, sure he looks you should bring forth fruit. *Isa.* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. O that in return for all the benefits of Providence, you would say to God, as grateful *Elisha* said to the *Shunamite*, behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? 2 *Kings* 4. 13. and with *David*, *Psal.* 116. 12. *what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!* He is ever doing you good; be you always abounding in his work. His Providence stands by you in your greatest distresses and dangers; don't you flinch from God when his service and your duty is compassed about with difficulties. O be active for that God who is acting every moment for you.

Fourth Corollary.

DOth God *perform all things for his people? Do not distrust him then as often as new or great difficulties arise.* Why should you think he that hath done so many things for you, will now do no more? Surely, the Lords hand is not shortned that it cannot *save*, *nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear*; if any thing put a stop to his mercy, 'tis your iniquities, your distrust and infidelity. *Isa.* 59. 1. *How long will it be ere you believe him?* If a thousand and ten thousand of tryals and experiences of his tender care, faithfulness and love will cure this distemper in you, you have them at hand to do it. If the frequent confutations of this your distrust by the unexpected

breakings

breakings out of mercy for you under like discouragements will cure it, look back and you may see them. Certainly you have been often forced by Providence with shame and repentance to retract your rash censures of his care; and yet will you fall into the same distemper again? Oh that you would once learn this great truth, That no man ever wanted that mercy, which he wanted not an heart to trust and wait quietly upon God for. You never yet sought God in vain, except when you sought him vainly.

The Fifth Corollary.

DOth God perform all things for you? then seek God for all by prayer, and never undertake any design without him: Certainly, if he do not perform it for you, you can never have what you desire and labour for: and though he have designed to perform this or that mercy for you, yet for these things he will be enquired of that he may do it for you: *Ezek.* 36. 37. I reckon that business as good as done, that mercy as good as if it were in hand, that trouble as good as over, for the doing, enjoying, or removing whereof we have engaged God by prayer. 'Tis our folly to engage this instrument and that for us, to attempt this way and that to compass our design, and all the while forget him upon whose pleasure all instruments and means entirely depend. That which begins not with prayer, seldom winds up with comfort. *The way of man is not in himself*; if it were, prayer might then be reckon'd lost labour. O let him that

performs all, be owned and acknowledged in all.

The sixth Corollary.

LAstly, *If God perform all things for us, then it is our great Interest and concernment in all things to study to please him, upon whom we depend for all things.*

It is a grave and weighty observation of *Chrysostome.* Nothing (saith he) should be grievous and bitter to a Christian, but to provoke the displeasure of God. Avoid that, and no affliction or trouble whatever can cast down such a prudent Soul; but even as a spark is easily extinguish'd in the Sea, so will the favour of God extinguish those troubles. It is with such a Soul (saith he) as it is with the Heavens; we think the Heavens suffer when they are over-spread with clouds, and the Sun suffers when it is eclipsed; but there is no such thing, they suffer not when they seem to suffer. *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia.* Every thing is well, and shall be well, when all is well betwixt us and God. The great consolation of the Saints lyes in this, that all that concerns them is in the hands of their father. *Pene desperassem nisi Christus esset caput Ecclesiæ.* I had utterly despair'd (said *Luther*) had not Christ been head of the Church. When he that *performs all things is our God, even our God* that delights in our prosperity, that rejoyces over us to do us good, what ample security is here in the greatest confusions and dangers? When one told *Bonromeus* that there were some

Chrys. Hom. in 2 Cor. 7

that

that laid wait for his life, his answer was, *An Deus est in mundo pro nihilo?* What, is God in the World for nothing? And as notable was the reply of *Silentiarius* in a like case, *si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?* If God take no care of me, how do I live, how have I subsisted hitherto? Though it seems a *Romance* to many (saith a late grave Author) yet we must either quit the Scripture, or give credit to this, that the most infallible Rules for one to raise his fortune and ensure a destiny that can controul the stars, are given forth there (*viz.* in the Scriptures) where that evidently is found, *Sapiens dominabitur Astris, & quomodo unusquisq; faber potest esse fortunæ suæ.* A good man may even be his own Carver. O that we would but steer our course according to those rare politicks of the Bible, those divine Maxims of Wisdom. Fear nothing but sin. Study nothing so much as how to please God. Warp not from your integrity under any temptation. Trust God in the way of your duty. These are sure Rules to secure your selves and your Interest in all the Vicissitudes of this life.

thor of fulfil- of ripture. r. pag.

MY last work will be to state three or four practical cases about this subject, and so I shall shut up this discourse of Providence.

First,

First Case.

How may a Christian discover the will of God and his own duty under dark and doubtful Providences?

In order to the clearing of this Case, we are to consider, what is meant by the will of God; what by those doubtful Providences, that make the discovery of his will difficult, and what rules are to be observed for the clearing up of Gods will to our selves under such difficult and puzzling Providences.

As to the Will of God, it falls under a two-fold consideration, of his *secret* and *revealed* Will; this distinction is found in that Scripture, Deut. 29. 29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us*, &c. The first is the rule of his own actions; the later of ours: and this only is concerned in the Quere. (1.)

This Revealed Will of God is either manifested to us in his *Word*, or in his *Works*. The former is his *commanding* Will, the later his *effecting* or *permitting* Will; the one versant about good, the other about evil.

In these wayes God manifests his Will to men, but yet with great variety and difference, both as to the things revealed, the persons to whom he reveals them, and the degrees of clearness in which they are revealed.

(1.) As to the things revealed, there is great difference: for the great and necessary duties of

Religion

Religion are revealed to us in the Word, with greatest perspicuity and evidence. About these there can be no hesitation; but things of a lower nature and lesser concern are left more obscure.

(2.) As to the persons to whom God reveals his Will, there is great difference; some are strong men, others babes, 1 *Cor.* 3. 1. Some have senses exercised, others are of weak and dull understanding; and we know every thing is received according to the ability and measure of the person receiving it. Hence it is, that one mans way is very plain before him, he knows what he ought to do: the other is ever and anon at a loss, bivious and uncertain what to do.

(3.) The manner of Gods revealing his Will to men is also very different. Some have had special, personal, and peculiar discoveries of it made to them. So had *Samuel* about the choice of the person whom he should anoint King, 1 *Sam.* 9. 15. And so had *David*, 1 *Sam.* 23. 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12. where you find upon his enquiry of God (likely by the *Urim* and *Thummim*) God told him what was his duty as to that expedition, and what would be the event of it.

But now, all are tyed up to the ordinary standing rule of the written Word, and must not expect any such extraordinary revelations from God. The way we now have to know the Will of God concerning us in difficult cases, is to search and study the Scriptures, and where we find no particular rule to guide us in this or that particular case, there we are to apply general rules, and govern our selves according to the Analogy and proportion they bear towards each other.

But

But now it often falls out, that in such doubtful cases we are entangled in our own thoughts, and put to a loss what course to take. We pray with *David*, that God would *make his way plain before us*, Psal. 5. 8. Afraid we are of displeasing God, and yet doubtful we may do so; whether we resolve this way, or that. And this comes to pass not only through the difficulty of the case, but from our own ignorance and inadvertency; and very frequently from those *Providences* that lye before us, wherein God seems to hint his mind to us, this way or that, and whether we may safely guide our selves by those intimations of Providence, is doubtful to us. (2.)

That God doth give men secret hints and intimations of his Will by his Providence, cannot be doubted; but yet Providences in themselves, are no stable rule of duty, nor sufficient discovery of the Will of God. We may say of them, as it is, Job 23. 8, 9. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.*

If Providence in it self be allowed to be a sufficient discovery of Gods Will to us, then we shall be forced often times to justifie and condemn the same cause or person, forasmuch as there is *one event happens to all*, and as it falls out to the good, so to the wicked, *Eccles.* 9. 2. Beside, if Providence alone were the Rule to judge any action or design by; then a wicked undertakement would cease to be so, if it should succeed well; but sin is sin still, and duty is duty still, what ever the events and issues of either be.

(3.) The safest way therefore to make use of Providence in such cases is, to consider them as they follow the commands or promises of the Word, and not singly and separately in themselves. If you search the Scriptures with an indifferent and unbyassed spirit, in a doubtful case, pray for counsel and direction from the Lord, attend to the dictates of Conscience. And when you have done all, shall find the Providences of God falling out agreeably to the dictates of your own conscience, and the best light you can find in the Word, you may in such cases make use of it as an encouragement to you, in the way of your duty: But the most signal demonstrations of Providence are not to be accepted against a Scripture rule; no smiles or successes of Providences may in this case encourage us to proceed; and on the other side, no frowns or discouragements of Providence should dishearten us in the way of our duty, how many soever we should encounter therein. Holy *Job* could not find the meaning of God in his Works, yet would he not *go back from the commandments of his lips*, Job 23. 9. The like resolution you find in *David*, to proceed in his duty, and cleave to the Word, how many stumbling blocks soever Providence should permit to be laid in his way. *I am become* (saith he) *like a bottle in the smoke* (not only blackt, but withered up by troubles) *yet do I not forget thy Statutes*, Psal. 119. 83. and again Ver. 87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.*

Paul by the direction of the Spirit was engaged to go to *Jerusalem*, *Acts* 20. 22. After a clear revelation of the mind of God to him in

that

that matter, how many difficult and discouraging Providences befell him in his way? The *Disciples* at *Tyre* said to him *by the Spirit* (though in that they followed their own spirits) *that he should not go to Jerusalem*, Acts 21. 4.

Then at *Cesarea* he met *Agabus* a Prophet, who told him what should befall him when he came thither, *Chap.* 21. 10, 11. all this will not dissuade him. And after all this, how passionately do the Brethren beseech him to decline that journey? *Ver.* 12, 13. Yet knowing his rule, and resolving to be faithful to it, he puts by all and proceeds in his journey.

Well then, Providence in concurrence with the Word may give some encouragement to us in our way; but no testimony of Providence is to be accepted against the Word. If Scripture and Conscience tell you, such a way is sinful, you may not venture upon it, how many opportunities and encouragements soever Providence may suffer to offer themselves to you, for they are only permitted for your Tryal, not your encouragement: Take this therefore for a sure Rule, That no Providence can legitimate, or justifie any moral evil. Nor will it be a plea before God for any man to say, The Providence of God gave me encouragement to do it, though the Word gave me none. If therefore in doubtful cases, you would discover Gods will, govern your selves in your search after it by these Rules.

Get the true fear of God upon your hearts, be really afraid of offending him; God will not hide his mind from such a soul; Psal. 25. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;*

him, and he will shew them his Covenant.

2.) Study the *Word* more, and the concerns and interests of the World less. The Word is a light to your feet, *Psal.* 119. 105. (*i. e.*) it hath a discovering and directive usefulness as to all duties to be done, and dangers to be avoided: it is the great Oracle at which you are to enquire: treasure up its rules in your hearts, and you will walk safely, *Psal.* 119. 11. *thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*

3.) Reduce what you know into practice, and you shall know what is your duty to practise, *Joh.* 7. 17. *If any man do his will he shall know of the doctrine.* Psal. 111. 10. *A good understanding have all they that do thereafter.*

4.) Pray for illumination and direction in the way that you should go: beg the Lord to guide you in straits, and that he would not suffer you to fall into sin. This was the holy practice of *Ezra*, chap. 8. 21. *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might afflict our selves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.*

And this being done, follow Providence so far as it agrees with the word, and no farther. There is no use to be made of Providence against the word, but in subserviency to it. And there are two excellent uses of Providence in subserviency to the word.

(1.) Providences as they follow Promises and Prayer are Evidences of God's faithfulness in their Accomplishment. When *David* languished under a disease, and his Enemies began to triumph in the hopes of his downfall; he prays, *Psal.* 41. 10. that God would be merciful to him, and raise

raiſe him up; and by that, he ſaith, *he knew the Lord favoured him, becauſe his Enemy did not triumph over him, ver.* 11. this Providence he looked upon as a token for good, as elſewhere he calls it, *Pſal.* 86. 17. And (2.) Providences give us loud calls to thoſe duties which the Command lays upon us, and tell us when we are actually and preſently under the obligation of the Commands as to the performance of them. Thus when ſad Providences befall the Church or our ſelves, they call us to humiliation; and let us know that then the command upon us to humble our ſelves at the feet of God is in force upon us, *Micah* 6. 9. *The Lords voice cryeth to the City, and the man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name, hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.* The Rod hath a voice; and what doth it ſpeak? Why now is the time to humble your ſelves under the mighty hand of God. This is the day of trouble in which God hath bid you to call upon him. And *e contra*, when comfortable Providences refreſh us, it now informs us, this is the time to rejoyce in God according to the rule, *Eccleſ.* 7. 14. *in the day of proſperity be joyful.* Theſe precepts bind *always*, but not *to always*. It's our duty therefore and our wiſdom to diſtinguiſh ſeaſons, and know the proper duties of every ſeaſon: and Providence is an *Index* that points them out to us. Thus of the firſt Caſe.

Precepta affirmativa obligant ſemper, non ad ſemper.

The Second Case.

HOw may a Christian be supported in waiting upon God whilst Providence delays the performance of the mercies to him for which he hath long pray'd and waited?

Two things are supposed in this Case.

(1.) That Providence may linger and delay the performance of those mercies to us that we have long waited and prayed for.

(2.) That during that delay and suspension, our hearts and hopes may be very low, and ready to fail.

(1.) Providence may long delay the performance of those mercies we have prayed and waited upon God for.

For the right understanding of this, know that there is a twofold term or season fixed for the performance of mercy to us. One by the Lord our God, in whose hand times and seasons are, *Acts* 1. 7. Another by our selves, who raise up our own expectations of mercies sometimes meerly through the eagerness of our desires after them, and sometimes upon uncertain conjectural grounds and appearances of encouragement that lye before us.

Now nothing can be more precise, certain and punctual, than is the performance of mercy at the time and season which God hath appointed, how long soever it be, or how many disap-

cles soever lye in the way of it. There was a time prefixed by God himself for the performance of that Promise of *Israel's* deliverance out of *Egypt*; and it's said, *Exod.* 12. 41. *At the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self same day it came to pass, that all the host of the Lord went out of the Land of* Egypt. Compare this with *Acts* 7. 17. and there you have the ground and reason why their deliverance was not, nor could be delayed one day longer, because *the time of the Promise was now come.* Promises like a pregnant woman must accomplish their appointed months, and when they have so done, Providence will Midwife the mercies they go big withal into the world, and not one of them shall miscarry.

But for the seasons which are of our own fixing and appointment, as God is not tyed to them, so his Providences are not governed by them: and hence are our disappointments. *We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of health, and behold trouble, Jer.* 8. 15. And hereupon is it that we fret at the delays of Providence, and suspect the faithfulness of God in their performance. *But his thoughts are not our thoughts, Isa.* 55. 8. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as men count slackness, 2 Pet.* 3. 9. It is slackness if you reckon by our own rule and measure, but it is not so, if you reckon and count it by God's. The Lord doth not compute and reckon his seasons of working by our *Arithmetick*, You have both these Rules compared, and the ground of our mistake detected in that Scripture, *Hab.* 2. 3. *The Vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

God appoints the time: when that appointed time is come, the expected mercies will not fail. But in the mean time, *though it tarry* (saith the Prophet) *wait for it; for it will not tarry.* Tarry, and not tarry, how shall this be reconciled? The meaning is, it may tarry much beyond *your expectation*, but not a moment beyond *God's appointment.*

(2.) During this delay of Providence, the hearts and hopes of the people of God may be very low, and much discouraged. This is too plain from what the Scriptures have recorded of others, and every one of us may find in our own experiences. We have an instance of this in *Isa.* 49. 13, 14. in the 13. *verse* you have God's faithful Promise, that *he will comfort his people, and have mercy upon his afflicted.* Enough one would think to raise and comfort their hearts. But the mercy promised was long in coming, they waited from year to year, and still the burthen pressed them, and was not removed. And therefore *ver.* 14. Zion *said, the Lord hath forsaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me,* q. d. It's in vain to look for such a mercy, God hath no regard to us, we are out of his heart and mind, he neither cares for us nor minds what becomes of us.

So it was with *David*, after God had made him such a Promise, and in the time thereof so faithfully performed it, that never was mercy better secured to any man; for they are call'd, *the sure mercies of* David, *Isa.* 55. 3. yet Providence delayed the accomplishment of them so long, and suffered such difficulties to intervene, that he even despairs to see the accomplishment

of them, but even concludes God had forgotten him too, *Psal.* 13. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?* And what he speaks here by way of *question*, he elsewhere turns into a positive *conclusion*, *Psal.* 116. 11. *All men are Lyars, I shall one day perish by the hand of* Saul. And the causes of these despondencies, and sinkings of heart are partly from our selves, and partly from Satan. If we duly examine our own hearts about it, we shall find that these sinkings of heart are

The immediate effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the word with that full trust and confidence that is due to the infallible word of a faithful and unchangeable God. You may see the ground of this faintness in that Scripture, *Psal.* 27. 13. *I had fainted unless I had believed.* Faith is the only Cordial that relieves the heart against these faintings and despondencies. Where this is wanting, or is weak, no wonder our hearts sink at this rate, when discouragements are before us. (1.)

Our judging and measuring things by the rules of sense, this is a great cause of our discouragements. We conclude, According to the Appearances of things will be their Issues. If *Abraham* had done so, in that great tryal of his faith, he had certainly lost his footing; *but against hope*, (*i. e.*) against natural probability, *he believed in hope, giving Glory to God*, Rom. 4. 18. If *Paul* had done so, he had fainted under his tryals, 2 *Cor.* 4. 16, 18. *We faint not* (saith he) *whilst we look not at the things that are seen*, q. d. That which keeps up our spirits, is our looking off from things present and visible, and measuring (2.)

all by another rule, *viz.* the power and fidelity of God firmly engaged in the Promises.

(2.) In all these things *Satan* manages a design upon us. Hence he takes occasions to suggest hard thoughts of God, and to beat off our Souls from all confidence in him, and expectations from him. He is the great make-bate betwixt God and the Saints. He reports the difficulties and fears that are in our way with advantage, and labours to weaken our hands, and discourage our hearts in waiting upon God. And these suggestions gain the more credit with us, because they are confirm'd and attested by sense and feeling.

But here is a desperate design carrying on under very plausible pretences against our souls. It concerns us to be watchful now, and maintain our faith and hope in God. Now blessed is he that can resign all to God, and quietly wait for his salvation. To assist the soul in this difficulty, I shall offer some farther help beside what hath been formerly given under the *first Caution*, pag. 158. in the following Considerations.

First Consideration.

Consid. Though Providence do not yet perform the mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God; for it's possible God never gave you any ground for your expectation of these things from him. It may be you have no *Promise* to bottome your hope upon; and if so, why shall God be suspected and dishonoured by you in a case wherein his truth and faithfulness was never engaged to you? If we are crossed in our outward concernments, and see our ex-

expectations of prosperity dashed; if we see such or such an outward comfort removed, from which we promised our selves much; why must God be accused for this? these thing you promised your selves: but where did God promise you prosperity, and the continuance of those comfortable things to you? produce his Promise, and shew wherein he hath broken it. It is not enough for you to say, There are general Promises in the Scripture, that *God will withhold no good thing*, and these are good things which Providence withholds from you; for that Promise, *Psal.* 84. 11. hath its limitations, it is expresly limited to such as *walk uprightly*; and it concerns you to examine whether you have done so, before you quarrel with Providence for non-performance of it. Ah friend, search thine own heart, reflect upon thine own ways; seest thou not so many flaws in thine integrity, so many turnings aside from God, both in heart and life, that may justifie God, not only in withholding what thou lookest for, but in removing all that thou enjoyest? And besides this limitation as to the *Object*, it's limited (as all other promises relating to externals are) in the matter or things premised by the Wisdome and Will of God, which is the only Rule by which they are measured out to men in this World, (*i.e.*) such mercies in such proportions as he sees needful and most conducible to your good; and these given out in such times and seasons as are of his own appointment, not yours.

God never came under an absolute unlimited tye for outward comforts to any of us; and if we be disappointed, we can blame none but our selves. Who bid us expect rest, ease, deliv-

and things of this kind in this world? He hath never told us, we shall be rich, healthy and at ease in our habitations; but on the contrary, he hath often told us, we must expect *troubles in the world*, John 16. 33. and that *through many tribulations we must enter into his Kingdom*, Acts 14. 22. All that he stands bound to us by Promise for, is to *be with us in trouble*, Psal. 91. 15. to supply our real and absolute needs, Isa. 41. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; and to sanctifie all these Providences to our good at last, Rom. 8. 28. *All things shall work together for good to them that love God.* And as to all these things not one tittle ever did, or shall fail.

Second Consideration.

Consid. But if you say you have long waited upon God for spiritual mercies to your souls according to the Promise, and still those mercies are deferred, and your eyes fail whilst you look for them; I would desire you seriously to consider of what kind those spiritual mercies are, for which you have so long waited upon God. Spiritual mercies are of two sorts; such as belong to the *Essence*, the very being of the new creature, without which it must fail: or to its *well being*, and the comfort of the inner man; without which you cannot live so cheerfully as you would. The mercies of the former kind are Absolutely necessary, and therefore put into Absolute Promises, as you see, Jer. 32. 40. *And*

I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. But for the rest they are dispensed to us in such measures, and at such seasons as the Lord sees fit, and many of his own people live for a long time without them. The donation and continuation of the Spirit, to quicken, sanctifie and unite us with Christ is necessary, but his joyes and comforts are not so. A Child of light may *walk in darkness*, Isa. 50. 10. He lives by faith, and not by feeling.

Third Consideration.

3. *Consid.*

You complain, Providence delayes to perform to you the mercies you have prayed and waited for; but have you right ends in your desires after these mercies? It may be that's the cause, you ask and receive not, *James* 4. 3. The want of a good *aim*, is the reason why we want good *success* in our prayers. It may be we pray for prosperity, and the end is to please the flesh; we look no higher than the pleasure and accommodation of the flesh; we beg and wait for deliverance from such a trouble and affliction, not that we might be the more expedite and prepared for obedience, but freed of what is grievous to us, and destroyes our pleasure in the world.

Certainly if it be so, you have more need to judge and condemn your selves, than to censure and suspect the care of God.

Fourth

Fourth Consideration.

4. *Consid.* You wait for good, and it comes not; but is your will brought to a due submission to the Will of God about it? Certainly God will have you come to this before you enjoy your desires. Enjoyment of your desires is the thing that will please you, but resignation of your wills, is that which is pleasing to God: if your hearts cannot come to this, mercies cannot come to you. *David* was made to wait long for the mercy promised him, yea, and to be content without it before he enjoyed it, *Psal.* 131. 2. he was brought to be *as a weaned Child*, and so must you.

Fifth Consideration.

5. *Consid.* Your betters have waited long upon God for mercy, and why should not you? *David* waited till his *eyes failed*, Psal. 69. 3. The Church *waited for him in the way of his judgements*, Isa. 26. 8. Are you better than all the Saints that are gone before you? Is God more obliged to you, than to all his people? They have quietly waited, and why should not you?

Sixth Consideration.

6. *Consid.* Will you lose any thing by patient waiting upon God for mercies? Certainly, not at all: Yea, it will turn to a double advantage to you to continue in a quiet submissive waiting posture upon God. For, (1.) Though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you

you are exercising your Grace; and it's more excellent to act Grace, than to enjoy comfort. All this while the Lord is training you up in the exercise of faith and patience, and bending your wills in submission to himself; and what do you lose by that? Yea, and (2.) When ever the desired mercy comes, it will be so much the sweeter to you: for, look how much faith and prayer hath been employed to produce it, how many wrestlings you have had with God for it, so many more degrees of sweetness you will find in it, when it comes. O therefore, faint not, how long soever God delay you.

Seventh Consideration.

Are not those mercies you expect from God worth the waiting for? If not, it is your folly to be troubled for the want of them: If they be, why don't you continue waiting? Is it not all that God expects from you for the mercies he bestows upon you, that you wait upon him for them? You know you have not deserved the least of them at his hands. You expect them not as a *recompence*, but a *free favour*, and if so, then certainly the least you can do, is to wait upon his pleasure for them. 7. Cons.

Eighth Consideration.

Consider how many Promises are made in the Word to waiting souls. One Scripture calls them *blessed that wait for him*, Isa. 30. 18. Another tells us, *none that wait for him shall be ashamed*, Psal. 25. 3. (*i.e.*) they shall not be finally disappointed. 8. Cons.

pointed, but at last be partakers of their hopes. A third Scripture tells us, *they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*, Isa. 40. 31. A Promise you had need make much use of in such a fainting time, with many more of like nature; and shall we faint at this rate in the midst of so many cordials as are prepared to revive us in these Promises?

Ninth Consideration.

Consid. How long hath God waited upon you when you will comply with his commands, come up to your engagements and promises? You have made God wait long for your reformation and obedience; and therefore have no reason to think it much, if God make you wait long for your consolation. We have our *How longs*, and hath not God his? We cry, Psal. 6. 3. *But thou O Lord, how long?* Psal. 13. 1, 2. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?* But surely we should not think these things long, when we consider, how long the Lord hath exercised his patience about us. We have made him say, How long, how long? Our *unbelief* hath made him cry, *How long will it be ere they believe me?* Numb. 14. 11. Our corrupt hearts have made him cry, *How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Jer. 4. 14. Our impure natures and wayes have made him cry, *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* Hosea 8. 5. If God wait upon

upon you with ſo much patience for your duties, well may you wait upon him for his mercies.

Tenth Conſideration.

This impatience and infidelity of yours, expreſt in your wearineſs to wait any longer, as it is a great evil in it ſelf, ſo very probably it is that evil which obſtructs the way of your expected mercies: you might have your mercies ſooner, if your ſpirits were quieter and more ſubmiſſive. 10. Con

And thus of the Second Caſe.

The Third Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian diſcern when a Providence is ſanctified, and comes from the love of God to him?

There are two ſorts or kinds of Providences verſant about men in this world, the iſſues and events of which are vaſtly different, yea, contrary to each other.

To ſome all Providences are over-ruled and ordered for good, according to that bleſſed Promiſe, *Rom.* 8. 28. not only things that are good in themſelves, as Ordinances, Graces, Duties and Mercies; but things that are evil in themſelves, as Temptations, Afflictions, and even their Sins and Corruptions ſhall turn in the iſſue to their advantage and benefit. For (1.)

though sin be so *intrinsecally* and *formally* evil in its own nature, that in it self it be not capable of sanctification; yet out of this worst of evils God can work good to his people; and though he never make sin the *Instrument* of good; yet his Providence may make it the *occasion* of good to his people; so that spiritual benefits may by the wise over-ruling of Providence be occasioned to the people of God by it.

And so for afflictions of all kinds, the greatest and sorest of them; they do work in the influence of Providence a great deal of good to the Saints, and that not only as the occasions, but as the Instruments and means of it, *Isa.* 27.9. *by this shall the iniquity of* Jacob *be purged,* (*i.e.*) by the instrumentality of this sanctified affliction.

(2.) To others nothing is sanctified either as an Instrument or occasion of any spiritual good; but as the worst things are ordered to the benefit of the Saints, so the best things wicked men enjoy do them no good. Their Prayers are turned into sin, *Psal.* 109. 7. The Ordinances are the savour of Death, 2 *Cor.* 2.16. The Grace of God turned into wantonness, *Jude v.* 4. Christ himself a rock of Offence, 1 *Pe.* 2.8. Their Table a snare, *Psal.* 69.22. Their Prosperity their ruine, *Prov.* 1.32. As persons are, so things work for good or evil. *Tit.* 1.15. *To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.*

Seeing therefore the Events of Providence fall out so opposite to each other upon the Godly, and Ungodly; every thing farthering the eternal good of the one, and the ruine of the other; it cannot but be acknowledged a most important

case

case in which every Soul is deeply concern'd; whether the Providences under which he is, be ſanctified to him or no?

For the clearing of which I ſhall premiſe two neceſſary Conſiderations, and then ſubjoyn the Rules which will be uſeful for the determination of the queſtion.

And firſt, Let it be conſidered, that we cannot know from the matter of the things before us, whether they be ſanctified or unſanctified to us; for ſo conſider'd, *all things come alike to all; and no man knoweth either love or hatred by all the things that are before him. Eccleſ.* 9. 1, 2. We cannot underſtand the mind and *heart* of God, by the things he diſpenſeth with his *hand*. If proſperous Providences befall us, we cannot ſay, Herein is a ſure ſign that God loves me; for who have more of thoſe Providences than the people of his wrath? *Pſal.* 73. 7. *They have more than their hearts can wiſh.* Sure that muſt be a weak Evidence for *Heaven*, which accompanies ſo great a part of the world to *Hell*. By theſe things we may teſtifie our love to God; but from ten thouſand ſuch enjoyments we cannot get any ſolid aſſurance of his love to us. (1.)

And from adverſe afflictive Providences we cannot know his hatred. If afflictions, great afflictions, many afflictions, long continued afflictions ſhould ſet a brand, or fix a Character of Gods hatred upon the perſons on whom they fall; where then ſhall we find Gods people in the world? We muſt then ſeek out the proud vain ſenſual wantons of the world, who ſpend their days in pleaſure, and ſay theſe are the men whom God loves.

Outward things are promiſcuously diſpenſed, and no man's ſpiritual eſtate is diſcernable by the view of his temporal. When God draws the Sword, it may *cut off the righteous* as well as *the wicked*, *Ezek.* 21. 3.

(2.) Though the Providences of God *materially* conſidered afford no evidence of Gods love to us, yet the *manner* in which they befall us, and the effects and fruits they produce in us, do diſtinguiſh them very manifeſtly; and by them we may diſcern whether they be ſanctified Providences, and fruits of the love of God, or no. But yet theſe effects and fruits of Providences by which we diſcern their nature, do not always preſently appear; but time muſt be allowed for the ſouls exerciſe under them. As it is *Heb.* 12. 11. *Now no affliction for the preſent ſeemeth joyous, but grievous: nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of Righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby.*

The benefit of a *Providence* is diſcern'd as that of a *medicine* is, for the preſent it gripes, and makes the ſtomach ſick and loathing; but afterwards we find the benefit of it in our recovery of health and chearfulneſs. Now the Providences of God being ſome of them comfortable, and others ſad and grievous to nature, and the way to diſcern the ſanctification and bleſſing of them, being by the manner in which they come and their operations upon our ſpirits; I ſhall conſider the caſe as it reſpects both ſorts of Providences, and ſhew you what effects of our troubles or comforts will ſpeak them to be ſanctified and bleſſed to us.

And

And first for sad and afflictive Providences (1.)
in what kind or degree soever they befall us, we may warrantably conclude, they are blessings to us, and come from the love of God, when

They come in a proper season, when we have (1.)
need of them, either to prevent some sin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiss, supine, and careless frame of spirit into which we are already fallen, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6. *if need be, ye are in heavines.* Certainly, it is a good sign that God designs your good by those troubles which are so fitted and wisely order'd to nick the opportunity. (2.)
If you see the Husbandman lopping a tree in the proper Season, it argues he aims at the fruitfulness and flourishing of it; but to do the same thing at *Midsummer* speaks no regard to it, yea, his design to destroy it.

When they are fitted both for *quality* and *degree* (2.)
to work properly upon our most predominant corruptions, then they look like sanctified strokes. The Wisdom of God is much seen in the choice of his rods. It is not any kind of trouble that will work upon and purge every sin; but when God chuses for us such afflictions as like Physick are appropriated to the disease the soul labours under; this speaks divine care and love. Thus we may observe, it's usual with God to smite us in those very comforts which stole away too much of the love and delight of our souls from God: to cross us in those things from which we raised up too great expectations of comfort. These Providences speak the jealousie of God over us, and his care to prevent far worse evils by these sad but needful strokes. And so for the degrees of our troubles, sanctu-

fied strokes are *ordinarily* fitted by the wisdome of God to the strength and ability of our inherent grace, *Isa.* 17. 8. *In measure when it shooteth forth thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.* It is an *Allusion* to a *Physician* who exactly weighs and measures all the ingredients which he mingles in a potion for his sick patient; that it may be proportionate to his strength and no more: and so much the next words intimate, *by this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.*

(3.) It is a good sign our troubles are sanctified to us, when they turn our hearts against sin, and not against God. There be few great afflictions which befall men, but they make them quarrelsome and discontented. Wicked men quarrel with God, and are filled with discontent against him. So the Scripture describes them, *Rev.* 16. 9. *They were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues.* But Godly men to whom afflictions are sanctified, they justifie God, and fall out with sin, they condemn themselves and give glory to God, *Dan.* 9. 7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces,* &c. And *Lam.* 3. 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* Happy afflictions which make the Soul fall out and quarrel only with sin.

(4.) It is a sure sign afflicting Providences are sanctified when they purge the heart from sin, and leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleansers, they pull down the pride, refine the earthliness, and purge

out the vanity of the Spirit. So you read, *Dan.* 11. 35. it purifies and makes their Souls white: Hence it's compar'd to a *furnace* which separates the droſs from the pure metal, *Iſa.* 48. 10. *Behold I have refined thee, but not with Silver: I have choſen thee in the furnace of affliction.* But for wicked men, let them be never ſo long in the *Furnace*, they loſe no droſs, *Ezek.* 24. 6. How many Chriſtians can bear witneſs to this truth! After ſome ſharp affliction hath been upon them, how is the earthlineſs of their hearts purged! they ſee no beauty, taſte no more reliſh in the world than in the white of an Egg. Oh how ſerious, humble, and heavenly are they, till the impreſſions made upon them by afflictions be worn off, and their deceitful luſts have again entangled them! And this is the reaſon why we are ſo often under the diſcipline of the rod. Let a Chriſtian (ſaith a late writer) be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almoſt good for nothing: he cannot pray, nor meditate, nor diſcourſe at that rate he was wont to do: but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and come to his knees again, and live at another rate.

It is a good ſign afflictive Providences are (5.
ſanctified to us, when we draw near to God under them and *turn to him that ſmites us.* A wicked man under affliction *revolts more and more, Iſa.* 1. 5. *turns not to him that ſmites him, Iſa.* 9. 13. but grows worſe than before; formality is turned into ſtupidity and dedolency.

But if God afflict his own people with a ſanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earneſt ſeeking of God; it makes them pray more frequent-

ly, spiritually and fervently than ever. When *Paul* was buffeted by Satan, he *besought the Lord thrice*, 2 Cor. 12. 8.

(6.) We may conclude our afflictions to be sanctified, and to come from the love of God to us, when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but inflame our love to him. This is a sure rule, Whatever ends in the increase of our love to God, proceeds from the love of God to us. A wicked man finds his heart rising against God when he smites him; but a gracious heart cleaves the closer to him: he can love, as well as justifie an afflicting God. *All this is come upon us: yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsly in thy Covenant: our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way: though thou hast sore broken us in the place of Dragons, and covered us with the shadow of Death*, Psal. 44. 17, 18, 19. Here you have a true account of the temper and frame of a gracious soul under greatest afflictions. To be *broken in the place of Dragons and covered with the shadow of death* imports the most dismal state of affliction: yet even then a gracious heart turns not back (*i. e.*) doth not for all this abate one drachm of love to God: God is as good and dear to him in afflictions as ever.

(7.) Lastly, We may call our afflictions sanctified when *divine teachings* accompany them to our souls, Psal. 94. 12. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.* Sanctified afflictions are *eye-salve*, they teach us sensibly and effectually when the Spirit accompanies them; the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the necessity of securing things that can-

not be shaken. Never doth a Christian take a truer measure both of his corruptions and graces, than under the rod. Now a man sees that filthiness that hath been long contracting in prosperity, what interest the Creature hath in the heart, how little faith, patience, resignation, and self-denyal we can find, when God calls us to the exercise of them. O 'tis a blessed sign, that trouble is sanctified, that makes a man thus turn in upon his own heart, search it, and humble himself before the Lord for the evils of it!

IN the next place let us take into consideration the other branch of Providences which are comfortable and pleasant. Sometimes it smiles upon us in successes, prosperity, and the gratification of the desires of our hearts. Here the Question will be how the sanctification of these Providences may be discovered to us? For resolution in this matter, I shall for clearness sake lay down two sorts of Rules; one Negative, the other positive.

First *Negative*.

It is a sign, that comfort is not sanctified to us, which comes not (ordinarily) in the way of Prayer. *The wicked boasteth of his hearts desire, and blesseth the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts*, Psal. 10. 3, 4. Here you see Providence may give men *their hearts desire*, and yet they never once

open their desires to God in prayer about it. But then those gifts of Providence are only such as are bestowed on the worst of men, and are not the fruits of love.

(2.) Whatever success, prosperity or comfort men acquire by sinful *mediums*, and indirect courses, are not sanctified mercies to them. This is not the method in which those mercies are bestowed. *Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenews without right*, Prov. 16. 8. better upon this account, that it comes in Gods way, and with his blessing, which never follows the way of sin. God hath cursed the wayes of sin, and no blessing can follow them.

(3.) Whatever prosperity and success makes men forget God, and cast off the care of duty, is not sanctified to them. It is unsanctified prosperity which lulls men asleep into a deep oblivion of God, Deut. 32. 13, 14, 15, 18. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oyl out of the flinty rock, butter of Kine, and milk of Sheep, with fat of Lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and Goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape; but Jesurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.* Rarè fumant fœlicibus aræ.

(4.) When prosperity is abused to sensuality, and merely serves as fuell to maintain fleshly lusts,

it is not sanctified. See Job 21. 11, 12, 13. *They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their Children dance. They take the Timbrell and Harp, and rejoyce at the sound of the Organ. They spend their dayes in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.*

It's a sign that prosperity is not sanctified to men, when it swells the heart with pride and self-conceitedness, Dan. 4. 29, 30. *At the end of twelve moneths he walked in the Palace of the Kingdom of Babylon. The King spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the Kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majesty?* (5.)

That success is not sanctified to men, which takes them off from their duty, and makes them wholly negligent, or very much indisposed to it, Jer. 2. 31. *O generation, see the Word of the Lord; have I been a Wilderness unto Israel? a Land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?* (6.)

Nor can we think that prosperity sanctified, which wholly swallows up the souls of men in their own enjoyments, and makes them regardless of publick miseries or sins, Amos 6. 4, 5, 6. *They lye upon beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. They chaunt to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of musick like David. They drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.* (7.)

But

But then *Positively.*

(1.) Those mercies and comforts are undoubtedly sanctified to men, which humble their souls kindly before God in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness of them, Gen. 32. 10. *And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,* &c.

(2.) Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into Cautions against sin, *Ezra* 9. 13. they are so many bands of restraint upon the soul that hath them, to make them shun sin.

(3.) They will engage a mans heart in love to the God of his mercies, *Psal.* 18. 1. compared with the *Title.*

(4.) They never satisfie a man as his Portion, nor will the soul accept all the prosperity in the world upon that score, Heb. 11. 26. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

(5.) Nor do they make men regardless of Publick sins or miseries, *Nehem.* 2. 1, 2, 3. compared with *Acts* 7. 23.

(6.) It's a sure sign that mercies are sanctified, when they make the soul more expedite and enlarged for God in duty, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. *Therefore the Lord stablished the Kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents, and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the wayes of the Lord,* &c.

(7.) To conclude, That which is obtained by prayer, and returned to God again in due praise

carries its own testimonials with it; that it came from the love of God, and is a sanctified mercy to the soul.

And so much of this Third Case.

The Fourth Case.

How may we attain unto an evenness and steddiness of spirit under the Changes, and contrary Aspects of Providence upon us?

Three things are supposed in this Case.

1. That Providence hath various and contrary Aspects upon the people of God.
2. That it is a common thing with them, to experience great disorders of spirit under those Changes of Providence.
3. That these disorders may be (at least in a great measure) prevented, by the due use and application of those rules and helps that God hath given us in such Cases.

(1.) That Providence hath various, yea, contrary Aspects upon the people of God, is a case so plain, that it needs no more than the mentioning, to let it in to all our Understandings. Which of all the people of God have not felt this truth? Providence rings the changes all the world over. *He encreaseth the Nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations, and straitneth them again*, Job 12. 23. The same it doth with

with persons, Psal. 102. 10. *Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.* See what a sad Alteration Providence made upon the Church, Lam. 1. 1, 12. *How doth the City sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become as a Widow! She that was great among the Nations, and Princess among the Provinces, how is she become tributary! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.* And how great an Instance was *Job* of this truth, *Job* 29. *per tot.* and 30. compared? How many thousands have complained with *Naomi*, whose condition hath been so strangely altered, that others have said as the people of *Bethlehem* did of her, *Is this Naomi?* Ruth 1. 19, 20, 21.

2.) These Vicissitudes of Providence commonly cause great disorders of spirit in the best men. Look as intense *heat* and *cold* try the strength and soundness of the constitution of our bodies, so the *alterations* made by Providence upon our conditions, try the strength of our graces; and too often discover the weakness and corruption of holy men. *Hezekiah* was a good man; but yet his weakness and corruption was bewrayed by the alterations Providence made upon his conditions. When sickness and pains summoned him to the grave, what bitter complaints and despondencies are recorded? in *Isa.* 38. *per tot.* and when Providence lifted him up again into a prosperous condition, what ostentation and vain glory did he discover? *Isa.* 39. 2. *David* had more than a common stock of inherent grace, yet not enough to keep him in an equal temper

temper of spirit under great alterations, Psal. 30. 6, 7. *In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved; thou hidest thy face and I was troubled.* It is not every man can say with *Paul, I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound every where, and in all things I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*, Phil. 4. 12. He is truly rich in grace, whose riches or poverty neither hinders the acting, nor impoverisheth the stock of his graces.

Though the best men be subject to such disorders of heart under the changes of Providence; yet these disorders may in a great measure be prevented by the due application of such Rules and helps, as God hath given us in such cases. (3.)

Now, these *helps* are suited to a threefold *Aspect* of Providence upon us: *viz.*

1. Comfortable,
2. Calamitous,
3. Doubtful.

To all which I shall speak particularly and briefly.

Quest. 1.

HOw may we attain to an Evenness and Steddiness of heart under the *comfortable* Aspects of Providence upon us? *Quest.*

Under Providences of this kind, the great danger is, lest the heart be lifted up with pride and

and vanity, and fall into a drowsie and remiss temper. To prevent this, we had need urge humbling and awakening Considerations upon our own hearts; such are these that follow.

First Consideration.

Consid. These gifts of Providence are common to the worst of men, and are no special distinguishing fruits of Gods love. The vilest of men have been filled even to satiety with these things, Psal. 73. 7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.*

Second Consideration.

Consid. Think how unstable and changeable all these things are. What you glory in to day, may be none of yours to morrow, Prov. 23. 5. *Riches make themselves wings, and flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* As the Wings of a Fowl grow out of the substance of its body, so the cause of the Creatures transitoriness is in it self: It's subjected to *vanity*, and that vanity, like Wings, carries it away: they are but *fading flowers*, James 1. 10.

Third Consideration.

Consid. The Change of Providences is never nearer to the people of God, than when their hearts are lifted up, or grown secure by prosperity. Doth *Hezekiah* glory in his Treasures? The next news he hears, is of an impoverishing Providence at hand, *Isa.* 39. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Others may

may be left to perish in [illegible]ified Prosperity, but you shall not.

Fourth Consideration.

This is a great discovery of the Carnality and corruption that is in thy heart: it argues an heart little set upon God, little mortified to the world, little acquainted with the vanity and ensnaring nature of these things. O you know not what hearts you have, till such Providences try them. And is not such a discovery matter of deep humiliation? 4. Consid.

Fifth Consideration.

Was it not better with you in a low condition, than it is now? Reflect, and compare state with state, and time with time. How is the frame of your hearts altered with the alteration of your condition? So God complains of *Israel*, Hosea 13. 5, 6. *I did know thee in the Wilderness, the land of drought; according to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me saith the Lord*: *q. d.* You and I were better acquainted formerly when you were in a low condition; Prosperity hath estranged you, and altered the case. How sad is it, that Gods mercies should be the occasion of our estrangement from him? 5. Consid.

Quest. 2. UPon the other side, it's worth considering how our hearts may be established and kept steddy under *Calamities* and *adverse Providences*.

Here we are in equal danger of the other Extream, *viz.* despondency and sinking under the frowns and strokes of cross Providences. Now to support and establish the heart in this case, take three helps.

First Consideration.

Consid. First, Consider, That afflictive Providences are of great use to the people of God, they cannot live without them. The Earth doth not more need chastening frosts, and mellowing snows, than our hearts do nipping Providences. Let the best Christian be but a few years without them, and he will be sensible of the need of them; he will find a sad *remission* and declining upon all his graces.

Second Consideration.

Consid. No stroke of Calamity upon the people of God, can *separate* them from Christ, Rom. 8. 35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall Tribulation?* There was a time when *Job* could call nothing in this world but *trouble* his own: he could not say, my Estate, my Honour, my Health, my Children; for all these were gone;

yet then he could say, *my Redeemer*, Job 19. 25. Well then, there is no cause to sink whilst Interest in Christ remains sure to us.

Third Consideration.

All your calamities will have an end shortly. The longest day of the Saints troubles hath an end; and then, no more troubles for ever. The troubles of the wicked will be to Eternity; but you shall *suffer but a while*, 1 Pet. 5. 10. If a *thousand* troubles be appointed for you, they will come to *one* at last, and after that no more: Yea, and though our troubles *be but for a moment, yet they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Let that support your hearts under all your sufferings.

Quest. 3.

LAstly, Let us consider, what may be useful to support and quiet our hearts under *doubtful Providences*, when our dear concernments hang in a doubtful suspence before us, and we know not which way the Providence of God will cast and determine them.

Now the best hearts are apt to grow solicitous and pensive, distracted with thoughtfulness about the event and issue. To relieve and settle us in this case, the following Considerations are very useful.

First Consideration.

Consid. First, Let us consider the vanity and inutility of such a solicitude; Matth. 6. 27. *Which of you* (saith our Lord) *by taking thought can add one Cubit?* We may break our peace, and waste our Spirits, but not alter the Case. We cannot turn God out of his way, Job 23. 13. *He is in one mind.* We may by strugling against God increase, but not avoid or lighten our troubles.

Second Consideration.

Consid. How often do we afflict and torment our selves by our own unquiet thoughts, when there is no real cause or ground for so doing? Isa. 51. 13. ——*And hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy, and where is the fury of the oppressor?* O what abundance of disquiet and trouble might we prevent, by waiting quietly till we see the issues of Providence, and not bringing as we do the evils of the morrow upon the day?

Third Consideration.

Consid. How great a ground of quietness is it that the whole dispose and management of all our affairs and concerns is in the hand of our own God and Father? No Creature can touch us without his commission or permission. *I know* (saith Christ) *thou couldst have no power against me,*

me, except it were given thee from above, John 19. 11. Neither Men nor Devils can act any thing without Gods leave; and be sure he will sign no order to your prejudice.

Fourth Consideration.

How great satisfaction must it be to all that 4. *Consi.*
believe the Divine Authority of the Scripture; that the faithfulness of God stands engaged for every line and syllable found therein? And how many blessed lines in the Bible may we mark, that respect even our outward concerns, and the happy issue of them all? Upon these two grounds, *viz.* that our outward concerns with their steddy direction to a blessed end is found in the Word; and this Word being of Divine Authority, the faithfulness and honour of God stands good for every Title that is found there. I say these are grounds of such stability, that our minds may repose with greatest security and confidence upon them even in the cloudiest day of trouble. Not only your eternal salvation, but your temporal Interests are there secured. Be quieted therefore in the confidence of a blessed issue.

Fifth Consideration.

How great and sure an expedient have the 5. *Cons.*
Saints ever found it to their own peace, to commit all doubtful issues of Providence to the Lord, and devolve all their cares upon him; Prov. 16. 3. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.* By *Works* he means

which our thoughts are rackt and tortur'd. Roll all these upon the Lord by faith, leave them with him, and the present immediate benefit you shall have by it (besides the comfort in the last issue) shall be tranquillity and peace in your thoughts. And who is there of any standing or Experience in Religion that hath not found it so?

The Fifth Case.

How may a Christian work his heart into a resigning frame unto the will of God; when sad Providences approach him, and presage great troubles and afflictions coming on towards him?

For the right stating and resolving of this important *case*, it will be needful to shew (1.) What is not included and intended in the Question. (2.) What it doth suppose and include in it, and lastly, what helps and directions are necessary for the due performance of this great and difficult duty.

First, *Negatively.*

As to the first, It must be premised that the Question doth not suppose the heart or will of a Christian to be at his own command and disposal in this matter: we cannot resign it, and subject it to the will of God whenever we desire so to do: the *duty* indeed is *ours*, but the *power* by which alone we perform it is *Gods*: We act as we are acted by the Spirit. It is with

by the influence of the Sun; while that continues they abide above, but when it fails they fall to the earth: We can do this, and all things else be they never so difficult, *through Christ that strengthens us, Phil.* 4. 13. But *without him we can do nothing, John* 15. 5. he doth not say, without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly, but without me ye can do nothing at all. And every Christian hath a witness in his own breast to attest this truth: for there are cases frequently occurring in the methods of Providence, in which notwithstanding all their prayers and desires, all their reasonings and strivings, they cannot quiet their hearts fully in the disposal and will of God; but on the contrary do find all their endeavours in this matter, to be but as the rolling of a returning stone against the Hills till God say to the heart be still, and to the will give up, nothing can be done.

Secondly, *Affirmatively.*

Next, Let us consider what this case doth suppose, and include in it, and we shall find

That it supposeth the people of God to have a foresight of troubles and distresses approaching and drawing near to them: I confess 'tis not always so, for many of our afflictions, as well as comforts, come by way of *surprizals* upon us: but oft times we have forewarnings of troubles both *publick* and *personal*, before we feel them: as the weather may be discerned by the face of the Sky, when we see a morning Sky red and low-

lowring, this is a natural sign of a foul and rainy day, *Matth.* 16. 3. and there are as certain signs of the times, whereby we may discern when trouble is near, even at the door. And these forewarnings are given by the Lord to awaken us to our duties, by which they may either be prevented, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. or sanctified and sweetned to us when they come. These signs and notices of approaching troubles are gathered *partly* from the *observation* and collation of parallel Scripture cases and examples, God generally holding one tenour and steddy course in the administrations of his Providences in all ages, 1 *Cor.* 10. 6. *partly* from the *Reflections* Christians make upon the frames and tempers of their own hearts, which greatly need awakening, humbling and purging Providences. For let a Christian be but a few years or months without a rod, and how formal, earthly, dead and vain, will his heart grow? And such a temper presages affliction to them that are beloved of the Lord, as really as the giving or sweating of the stones doth rain. Lastly, The ordering and disposing of the next causes into a posture and preparation for our trouble, plainly premonisheth us that trouble is at the door. Thus when the symptoms of sickness begin to appear upon our own bodies, the wife of our bosome, or our children that are as our own souls, Providence herein awakens our expectations of death and doleful separations: so when enemies combine together and plot the ruine of our liberties, estates, or lives, and God seemeth to loose the bridle of restraint upon their necks, now we cannot but be alarmed with the near approach of troubles, especially when at the same

time our conscience shall reflect upon the abuse and non-improvement of these our threatned comforts.

The case before us supposeth, that these premonitions and fore-runners of affliction, do usually very much disturb the order and break the peace of our souls, they put the mind under great discomposure, the thoughts under much distraction, and the affections into tumults and rebellion. (2.)

Ah how unwilling are we to surrender to the Lord the Loan which he lent us! to be disquieted by troubles when at ease in our enjoyments! How unwelcome are the messengers of affliction to the best men! we are ready to say to them as the Widow to *Elijah*, *What have I to do with thee, O man (O messenger) of God, art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my Son?* 1 *King.* 17. 18. And this ariseth partly from the remains of corruption in the best souls, for though every sanctified person is come by his own consent into the Kingdom, and under the government and Scepter of Christ, and every thought of his heart *de jure*, and of right must be subjected to him, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. yet *de facto* the conquest and power of grace is but incompleat and in part, and natural corruption like *Jeroboam* with his vain men riseth up against it, and causeth many mutinies in the soul, whil'st grace like young *Abijah* is weak handed, and cannot resist them. And partly from the advantage Satan makes upon the season to irritate and assist our corruptions: he knows that which is already in motion, is the more easily moved. In this confusion and hurry of thoughts he undiscernedly

ſhuffles in his temptations. Sometimes aggravating the evils which we fear with all the ſinking and overwhelming circumſtances imaginable. Sometimes divining and fore-caſting ſuch events and evils, as (haply) never fall out. Sometimes repining at the diſpoſes of God as more ſevere to us than others. And ſometimes reflecting with very unbelieving and unworthy thoughts upon the promiſes of God, and his faithfulneſs in them, by all which the affliction is made to ſink deep into the ſoul before it actually comes. The thoughts are ſo diſordered, that duty cannot be duly performed. And the ſoul is really weakned, and diſabled to bear its tryal when it comes indeed: juſt as if a man ſhould be kept waking and reſtleſs all the night with the thoughts of his hard journey which he muſt travel to morrow, and ſo when to morrow is come, he faints for want of reſt, mid-way his journey.

It is here ſuppoſed to be the Chriſtians great duty, under the apprehenſions of approaching troubles to reſign his will to Gods, and quietly commit the events and iſſues of all to him, whatever they may prove. Thus did *David* in the like caſe and circumſtances, 2 *Sam.* 15. 25, 26. *And the King ſaid unto* Zadock, *carry back the Ark of God into the City. If I ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and ſhew me both it and his habitation: but if he ſhall thus ſay, I have no deliglit in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as ſeemeth good to him.*

O lovely and truly Chriſtian temper! q. d. go *Zadock*, return with the Ark to its place, though I have not the ſymbol, yet I hope I ſhall

have the *real presence* of God with me in this sad journey: how he will dispose the events of this sad and doubtful Providence I know not: Either I shall return again to *Jerusalem*, or I shall not. If I do, then I shall see it again, and enjoy the Lord in his ordinances there. If I do not, then I shall go to that place where there is no need or use of those things. And either way it will be well for me, I am content to refer all to the divine pleasure, and commit the issue, be it whatever it will be, to the Lord.

And till our hearts come to the like resolve, we can have no peace within. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established*, *Prov.* 16. 3. By works he means not only every enterprize and business we *undertake*, but every puzzling, intricate, and doubtful event we *fear*. These being once committed by an act of faith, and our wills resigned unto his, besides the comfort we shall have in the issue, we shall have the present advantage of a well composed, and peaceful Spirit.

But this resignation is the difficulty; no doubt of peace, could we once bring our hearts to that. And therefore

I shall here subjoyn such helps and directions, as may through Gods blessing, in the faithful use of them, assist and facilitate this great and difficult work.

First Help.

And first, *Labour to work into your hearts a deep and fixed sense of the infinite wisdom of God, and your own folly and ignorance.* This will make resigna-

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by counsel, *Eph.* 1. 11. his understanding is infinite, *Psal.* 147. 5. his thoughts are very deep, *Psal.* 92. 5. but as for man, yea the wisest among men, how little doth his understanding penetrate the works and designs of Providence? And how oft are we forced to retract our rash opinions, and confess our mistakes? acknowledging that if Providence had not seen with better eyes than ours, and looked farther than we did, we had precipitated our selves into a thousand mischiefs, which by its wisdom and care we have escaped. It's well for us that the *seven eyes of Providence* are ever awake, and looking out for our good. Now if one creature can and ought to be guided and governed by another that is more wise and skilful than himself, as the *Client* by his learned *Counsel*, the *Patient* by his skilful *Physician*, much more should every creature give up his weak reason, and shallow understanding to the infinite wisdom of the omniscient God.

It's nothing but our pride and arrogance overvaluing our own understandings that makes resignation so hard. * Carnal reason seems to it self a wise disputant about the concerns of the flesh, but how often hath Providence baffled it? The more humility, the more resignation.

How few of our mercies and comforts have been foreseen by us? our own projects have come to nothing, and that which we never thought on, or contrived hath taken place; not our choice of the ground, or skill in weighing and delivering the *Bowl*, but some unforeseen Providence, like a sub in the *Green* was that which made the cast.

Deeply conſider the ſinfulneſs and vanity of torturing your own thoughts about the iſſues of doubtful Providences.

(1.) There is much ſin in ſo doing: for, all our anxious and ſolicitous emotions, what are they other than the immediate iſſues and fruits of pride and unbelief? There is not a greater diſcovery of pride in the world, than in the conteſts of our wills with the Will of God. It's a preſumptuous invading of Gods Prerogative, to dictate to his Providence, and preſcribe to his Wiſdom.

(2.) There is a great deal of vanity in it: all the thoughtfulneſs in the world will not make one hair white or black: all our diſcontents will not prevail with God to call back (or as the word may be rendered) make void his Word, *Iſa.* 31. 2. he is in one mind, *Job* 23. 13. the thoughts of his mind are from everlaſting, *Pſal.* 33. 11.

Third Help.

Set before you thoſe choice Scripture patterns of ſubmiſſion to the Lords Will in as deep, yea, much deeper points of ſelf-denyal than this before you, and ſhame your ſelves out of this quarrelling temper with Providence.

You know what a cloſe tryal that Providence was to *Abraham*, that called him from his native Countrey and Fathers houſe, to go he knew not whither; and yet it's ſaid in *Iſa.* 41. 2. he came

to

to Gods foot, as readily obeying his call, as a servant when his Master knocks for him with his foot.

Paul's voyage to *Jerusalem*, had a dismal aspect upon himself, he could expect nothing but bonds and prisons, as he tells us, *Acts* 20. 23. and a great tryal it was to the *Saints*, who could not tell how to give up such a *Minister*, yet he resigns up his will to Gods, *Acts* 20. 22. and so do they, Acts 21. 14. *The Will of the Lord be done.*

But far beyond these, and all other patterns, what an example hath our dear *Lord Jesus* set before us in the deepest point of self-denyal that ever was in the world. When the Father gave the Cup of sufferings into his hands in the garden, *Mark* 14. 36. a cup of wrath, the wrath of the great and terrible God, and that without mixture; the very taste whereof, put Nature into an Agony and astonishment, a sore amazement, a bloody sweat; and forced from him that vehement and sad cry, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass*; yet still with submission, *nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.* O blessed pattern of obedience, and resignation to the pleasure of God! What is your case to this?

Fourth Help.

Study the singular benefits and advantages of a Will resigned up, and melted into the Will of God.

(1.) Such a Spirit hath a continual *Sabbath* within it self; the thoughts are established, *Prov.* 16. 3. and truly, till a man come to this, he doth but too much resemble the *Devil*, who is a restless Spirit, seeking rest, but finding none.

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It was an excellent expression of *Luther*, to one that was much perplexed in his spirit about the doubtful events of some affairs of his that were then depending: *Dominus tuus omnia faciat, & tu nihil facias, sed sis Sabbatum Christi*: (*i.e.*) The Lord shall do all for thee, and thou shalt do nothing, but be the Sabbath of Christ. It is by this means that the Lord *gives his beloved sleep*, Psal. 127. 2. he means not the sleep of the body, but of the Spirit. *Fidelis* (a faith One upon that place) *etsi vitam agant laboriosam, compositis tamen & tranquillis animis in fidei silentio se continent, ac si dormirent*: (*i.e.*) Though believers live in the midst of many troubles here, yet with quiet and composed minds they keep themselves in the silence of faith, as though they were asleep.

(2.) Besides, it fits a mans spirit for communion with God in all his afflictions, and this alleviates and sweetens them beyond any thing in the world.

(3.) And surely a man is never nearer the mercy he desires, or the deliverance he expects, (as One truly observes) than when his soul is brought into a submissive temper. *David* was never nearer the Kingdom, than when he became as a weaned Child.

Fifth Help.

Lastly, *Think how repugnant an unsubmissive temper is both to your prayers and professions.*

You pray that the Will of God may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, and yet when it seems to cross your wills or interests, you strug-

ſtruggle and fret againſt it. You profeſs to have committed your ſouls to his keeping, and to leave your eternal concerns in his hands; and yet cannot commit things infinitely leſs valuable unto him. How contradictory are theſe things!

Your Profeſſion as Chriſtians, ſpeaks you to be led by the Spirit, but this practice ſpeaks you to follow the perverſe counſels of your own ſpirits. O then regret no more, diſpute no more, but lye down meekly at your Fathers feet, and ſay in all caſes and at all times, *the Will of the Lord be done.*

AND thus I have through the Aid of Providence, performed what I deſigned to ſpeak from this Scripture. I acknowledge, my performances have been accompanied with much weakneſs, yet have endeavoured to ſpeak of Providence the things that are right. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath thus far aſſiſted and protected me in this work.

How Providence will diſpoſe of my life, liberty and labours for time to come, I know not, but I cheerfully commit all to him, who hath hitherto performed all things for me.

FINIS.

Postscript.

IN consideration of the great and manifold advantages resulting from an humble and heedful observation of Providence, I cannot but judge it the concernment of Christians that have time and ability for such a work, to keep written Memorials, or *Journals* of Providences by them; for their own and others use and benefit. For want of collecting and communicating such observations, not only our selves, but the Church of God is damnified and impoverished.

Some say, the Art of *Medicine* was thus acquired and perfected: when any one had met with some rare *Physical Herb*, and accidentally discovered the vertues of it, he would post it up in some publick place; and so the *Physician* attained his skill, by a Collection of those posted Experiments and Receipts.

I am not for posting up all that a Christian knows or meets with in his Experience, for (as I have said before) *Non est religio, ubi omnia patent.* Religion doth not lay all open; but yet there is a prudent, humble and seasonable communication of our Experiences and observations of Providence, which is exceeding beneficial both to our selves and our brethren.

If Christians in reading the Scriptures, would judiciously collect and record the Providences they shall meet with there, and (if destitute of

other helps) but add those that have fallen out in their own time and experience; O what a precious Treasure would these make? How would it antidote their souls against the spreading Atheism of these dayes, and satisfie them, beyond what many other Arguments can do, that *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.*

Whilst this Work was under my hand, I was both delighted and assisted by a Pious and Useful *Essay* of an unknown Author, who hath to very good purpose improved many Scriptural passages of Providence, which seem to lye out of the road of common observation: Some passages I have noted out of it, which have been sweet to me. And O that Christians would every where set themselves to such work! Providence carries our lives, liberties and concernments in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its *Cupboard*, your money in its *Purse*, your safety in its enfolding *Arms*; and sure it is the least part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at its hands. More particularly,

(1.) Trust not your slippery memories with such a multitude of remarkable passages of Providence as you have, and shall meet with in your way to Heaven. It's true, things that greatly affect us, are not easily forgotten by us; and yet, how ordinary is it for new impressions to raze out former ones? It was a saying of that Worthy man Dr. *Harris*, My memory (said he) never failed me in all my life; for indeed, I durst never trust it. Written memorials secure us against that hazard; and besides, makes them useful to others when we are gone. So that you carry not away all your treasure to heaven

heaven with you, but leave these choice Legacies to your surviving friends. Certainly it were not so great a loss, to lose your Silver, your Goods and Chattels, as it is to lose your Experiences which God hath this way given you in this world.

(2.) Take heed of clasping up those rich treasures in a Book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there: but have frequent recourse to them, as oft as new wants, fears or difficulties arise, and assault you. Now, it's seasonable to consider and reflect, Was I never so distressed before? Is this the first plunge that ever befell me? *Let me consider the dayes of old, the years of ancient times*, as *Asaph* did, *Psal.* 77. 5.

(3.) Lastly, Beware of slighting former straits and dangers in comparison with present ones. That which is next us, alwayes appears greatest to us: and as time removes us farther and farther from our former mercies or dangers, so they lessen in our eyes, just as the Land from which they sail, doth to *Sea-men*. Know that your dangers have been as great, and your fears no less formerly than now. Make it as much your business, to preserve the sense and value, as the memory of former Providences, and the fruit will be sweet to you.

FINIS.

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The Commendable Care of the Printer hath left but little correcting work for thy Pen, what is, may be thus [illegible]ly rectified:

In the Title Page read לְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו: p. 118. l. 3. r. *great-*[illegible]: p. 146. l. 14. blot out *made*: p. 150. l. 7. r. *bride-*[illegible]*ber*: ibid. l. 16. for *anger*, r. *enmity*: p. 152. l. 31. [illegible] out *not*.

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